

YOUR 5 STEP FORMULA FOR A FABULOUS WARDROBE

EVEN ON A BUDGET



By Imogen Lamport



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Even on a Budget
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TABLE OF *contents*

- 4** About the Author
- 6** Introduction
- 8** Know What You Have
- 10** Know Your Current Lifestyle Needs
- 13** Know Who You are
- 15** Know What You Need
- 17** Capsule Wardrobe
- 22** Know How and Where to Shop
- 26** What to Splurge on
- 27** What to Save on
- 28** Some Final Tips

About the Author

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Imogen Lamport AICI CIP created Bespoke Image with a clear mission – to help people look amazing every day without stress and confusion.

As a former publicist for Penguin Books Australia, Imogen worked with many successful people. She became fascinated by the issue of image. Was there a connection between image and confidence? How important was image to success? Could she help someone improve their image to gain greater success?



After having children, she decided to leave the corporate world to pursue her true passion as an image consultant. She studied style and image in depth and learned what looked good on different body types. She studied colour analysis and realized how to help people shine with the right colours and contrast. She has been able to combine her natural talents with extensive knowledge and a scientific approach to understanding the how and why of style to figure out what works and why. She has spent well over a decade helping people to look and feel amazing.

In 2004, Imogen started her own business, Bespoke Image. In 2006, her dedication led her to become President of the AICI (Association of Image Consultants International) Australian chapter. She worked tirelessly to raise the industry's standards of training and professionalism, bringing the AICI's Certified Image Consultant exam to Australia. In 2007, Imogen was honoured as Chapter Member of the Year, and later, as VP of Communications, she created the chapter's first website and helped the organization grow substantially. She also spent 4 years (2012-2016) on the International Board of the AICI as VP Business Development.

In 2009, Imogen was awarded the Certified Image Professional certificate from the AICI, an achievement that acknowledges a highly competent level of training and experience. She is proud to be one of only eight in Australia to have reached this level. In 2019 Imogen was awarded the AICI's highest award, the Jane Segerstrom Award, for her innovation in the industry and actively supporting and promoting a positive image in our society.

Imogen trains image consultants through the Academy of Professional Image in Melbourne and has developed the worldleading Absolute Colour System of 18 colour directions... Her successful blog, Inside Out Style, offers valuable information and tips, and attracts readers from around the world who appreciate her ability to help them find their style through her online program 7 Steps to Style.

Her work with her clients that gives Imogen a lot of pleasure. Through workshops, corporate events, media appearances, online programs colour consultations, and personal shopping services, she shares her considerable knowledge with everyone from stay-at-home moms to corporate executives. Imogen wants to help you get dressed, get out the door, and get on with life.

Introduction

Read the latest fashion magazine and you'll be told that you must update your wardrobe with the latest looks. This advice will get very expensive very quickly.

But you know that you need to update your wardrobe to keep yourself current and modern rather than let your look become frumpy and old-fashioned. So how do you balance your budget whilst remaining stylish and youthful?

I'm not necessarily advocating buying the cheapest clothes or accessories. Cheap isn't necessarily budget friendly. In fact, I've seen more wastage in wardrobes where many cheap items are bought, but they never satisfy their owner and don't serve the purpose they were bought for. Instead I'm advocating being considered. Sure, your budget will come into the equation, but we need to consider how much value you'll get from the item before deciding whether it's a cheap or expensive item in your closet.

It's often cheaper to buy better quality that lasts longer, than buying poor quality garments that are badly constructed and quickly fall apart or pill, sag and bag. It's also way more environmentally friendly to do so too





Five Step Formula to Creating a Fabulous Wardrobe on a Budget

1. Know what you have
2. Know your current lifestyle needs
3. Know who you are
4. Know what you need
5. Know how and where to shop

1. Know What You Have



The first thing you need to do is assess your wardrobe. What do you already own? I can't tell you how many times I've done a wardrobe audit for a client and found multiples of the same garments. Very frequently my client will say "Oh I forgot I had that" as we pull one more black cardigan from the back of a drawer. Nobody needs 20 pairs of black trousers or 10 white shirts (unless that is all you wear).

What I notice is that often those with multiples of the same garments feel they have a lot of clothes but nothing to wear (or are bored with their wardrobe) as they are wearing the same or very similar clothes over and over again. Instead of having invested in different clothes they've blown their budget on more of the same.

1. Go through your wardrobe, pull everything

(and I mean everything out).

2. Go through each garment and assess it on these criteria:

- a. Does it still fit, or can it easily be altered to fit?
- b. Is it in good condition?
- c. Is it still fashionable?
- d. Does it work with your current age and lifestyle?
- e. Do you love it?
- f. Does it flatter your body?
- g. Does it flatter your colouring?

3. Donate the clothes that fall short.

There is no point keeping a garment that no longer serves its purpose.

4. Categorize your wardrobe.

Keep the same sorts of clothes together such as skirts with skirts, trousers with trousers, tops with tops. Depending on the layout of your wardrobe this will vary from person to person.

5. Colourise your wardrobe

From white via the rainbow to black, sort your clothes in their categories. You will find when you're looking to create capsules later, that this step really speeds up the process of seeing clearly what you have and what you need.

6. Hang your wardrobe.

The more clothes that you have hanging where you can see them, the more will be worn and not forgotten. It's very easy to forget the tops stuffed at the back of a drawer or cupboard. Get hangers that are all the same so that everything hangs evenly and cleanly. This is your boutique, make it beautiful and inspiring.

7. Clean out your shoes.

You don't want to ruin your fabulous look with shoes that have been worn to death. Go through the same criteria as you did for step 2. When looking at your shoes.

8. Donate the rest.

Clearing the clutter will make it so much easier to have a fabulous wardrobe that works for you. Plus, it helps you think more clearly

Now get out your camera or phone app and take photos of what you have left to work with. You need this inventory to create a catalogue of your wardrobe. This will be a great reminder when you're out in the shops.

2. Know Your Current Lifestyle Needs

How do you spend your time? What you do affects the kinds of clothes you need in your wardrobe. Are you a stay at home mother? A company director? A part-time office worker? A nurse? Teacher? Lawyer? Designer? You won't spend all your time doing just one activity either. Now it's time to assess your life. How do you spend your time?

Your average week looks like

**Roles (eg. Mother, Teacher,
Rock Climber etc.)**

**Activities
(eg. Cooking, Meetings, Parties)**

Week __

01

02

03

Week __

01

02

03

Week __

01

02

03

Now that you have a clearer picture of how you spend your time, think about how much time is spent doing each role and activity.

Then write down the percentages of time you spend in each sort of dress:

Percentage of Time Spent in Various Clothing Categories

1. Traditional Business _____% Suits, collared shirts, hose, classic shoes etc.
2. Smart Business _____% Pants, skirts, jackets, good quality knit tops, twin sets etc.
3. Relaxed Business _____% Trousers or skirts with knits – less formal, still smart.
4. Smart Casual _____% Trousers or skirts, interesting jackets, cardigans, jumpers, tops, dress jeans.
5. Casual _____% Jeans, tracksuits, sneakers, loafers, t-shirts etc.
6. Renowear _____% Gardening, renovating, painting
7. Hobby wear _____% Specialist hobby clothes
8. Special Occasion _____% Weddings, events, racewear, formal parties etc.



Special Instructions

Go back to your wardrobe and compare the percentages. If you spend 50% of your time in Smart Business clothes, then 50% of your wardrobe needs to fall into that category. Think about where you struggle to find the right outfit (on which occasions and situations do you have a hardest time finding the clothes to wear). These are your wardrobe gaps and where you need to focus your shopping.

01. Write down the areas where you struggle:

02. Write down where you have a much higher percentage of clothes than your lifestyle requires:

3. Know Who You Are



To ensure that the clothes and accessories you buy are not a waste of money you really need to know what your personal style is today not what it was 5 or 10 years ago.

So, what first steps can you do to reveal your personal style? First, go grab a notepad and pen and some magazines or catalogues.

1. What do you like and dislike

Now write a list of all the things you like about clothes, and then a list of everything you actively dislike, e.g. I like detail, I hate stuff that is completely plain, I like beading, I hate frills and flounces, I like comfortable, I hate constricting etc. Write as many of these likes and dislikes as you can. Often it's easier to think of what we dislike first. Write down everything, it's all valid.

2. Start pulling pictures out of magazines or source them off the internet

Look for clothing that you love the look of – don't worry if you don't think it will suit your body shape or your size, that is irrelevant at this stage.

3. Write a list of words (minimum 6 words) that reflect how you'd like to be perceived by others

These should relate to how you are as a person e.g. approachable, friendly, professional, successful, elegant, stylish, creative, avant-garde, bold, feminine, calm, down-to-earth, warm, polished, funky, etc.

4. Take out 4-5 favourite garments from your wardrobe

Write down what you like about them (e.g. their colour, shape, fit, feel, fabric etc). Then write down how they make you feel and look when wearing (e.g. smart, different, stylish, slim, tall, successful, versatile etc.). Do you notice a pattern? Are all your favourite clothes comfortable? Are they all different or a little creative? Do they all have a feminine waisted shape? Are they versatile – you can dress them up or down? It's really important to discover what works for you in your life and with your personality, then you can replicate this success.

5. Collect some more pictures that represent the words you wrote in no. 3

6. Apply the words you chose in the last step to each picture.

Write down your Style Words – these are the words that sum up you, the ones that really excite you.

Here are four examples of tunics with jeans, but each has a very different personality style:



relaxed
and casual

dramatic
and bold

sophisticated
and chic

soft and
feminine

4. Know what you need

Now you have a picture of how you spend your time, and your wardrobe requirements, plus you know what you currently have in your wardrobe, it's time to start creating wardrobe capsules and figuring out what you really need.

What are wardrobe capsules? They are a collection of garments – around 6 -12 garments that can all be worn together and mixed and matched. These few garments will create a myriad of outfits and will help you create a fabulous wardrobe on a budget

In a wardrobe capsule you may have:

- a. Skirt
- b. Dress
- c. Pants
- d. Tops
- e. Jacket
- f. Cardigan
- g. Jeans
- h. Shirt

Each garment needs to work with the others. Pick 1 or 2 neutrals and 1 or 2 colours that all work together and create a variety of outfits using these capsule pieces.

It's time to head back to your wardrobe with your Style Words at hand. Go through the clothes you have left, pull them out, try them on start creating outfits that shout your style words. You may find that you can create two or three outfits but maybe you need a jacket or cardigan to go over the top of that dress, write down these garments that are the missing links to your fabulous wardrobe. You might find that you have the basics but are missing the accessories that will finish off your outfits.

We don't go to the supermarket without a shopping list, nor should we go clothes shopping without a list, that's how we end up with multiples of the same garments and a wardrobe that still doesn't work for us.



Once you have shopped your own wardrobe you can then take your shopping list and go shopping, but not before then. Shopping your wardrobe forces you to be more creative with your clothes.

Can you layer a long sleeve top under a sleeveless summer dress and wear it in winter?

Can you layer a couple of fine wool knits rather than add another cardigan or jacket?

Can you create accessories groupings in colours to wear with neutral outfits to make it look like you've got a different outfit on?

Let your creative juices flow, try a whole lot of outfits on, yes some won't work, but you'll discover that some do and look great and you've not spent a cent (surely a great thing for your budget). Don't forget to try on the jewellery, scarves, shoes and handbags too as they are icing on your cake.

Capsule Wardrobes

If your wardrobe looks something like this, it won't work for you. These clothes are all orphans. They look great by themselves but don't work together.



If you have a wardrobe that looks like this you may have lots of clothes, but you don't have anything to wear. What to do? You'll need to take the pieces you love the most and create capsules around them.

For example, take the floral shirt top left and create a capsule surrounding it:



And easy 32 outfits in this capsule alone.

1. Red skirt, white top
2. Red skirt, white top, pink jacket
3. Red skirt, white top, green cardigan
4. Red skirt, red top,
5. Red skirt, red, top, pink jacket
6. Red skirt, floral top
7. Red skirt, floral top pink jacket
8. Red skirt, floral top, green cardigan
9. Red skirt, white top, floral top
10. Red skirt, red top, floral top
11. White pants, white top, pink jacket
12. White pants, white top, green cardigan
13. White pants, white top, floral shirt
14. White pants, red top
15. White pants, red top floral top
16. White pants, red top, pink jacket
17. Jeans, white top
18. Jeans, red top
19. Jeans, floral top
20. Jeans, white top, green cardigan
21. Jeans, floral top, green cardigan
22. Jeans, white top, floral shirt, pink jacket
23. Jeans red top, floral shirt, pink jacket
24. Jeans red top, floral shirt, green cardigan
25. Blue dress pink jacket
26. Blue dress, green cardigan
27. Blue dress, white top
28. Blue dress, red top
29. Blue dress, jeans, red top
30. Blue dress, jeans, white top
31. Blue dress, jeans, pink jacket
32. Blue dress, jeans, green cardigan
33. Etc.

And don't forget your accessories. A couple of different coloured scarves and shoes can change the look of your outfits again.



Now, let's take another garment from our mismatched wardrobe and expand that into a capsule. Take the black and white jacket, also include the red skirt, jeans, white and red tops and white pants from the first capsule and add black pants and a black skirt, red dress and teal top. Another 32+ outfits in this capsule



Now take the teal and turquoise skirt from the mismatched wardrobe, and include the pink jacket, the jeans and the white pants from the first capsule, teal top from the second capsule, add in a teal floral top, white cardigan, and the navy and turquoise top and navy jacket for a smart casual capsule.



Taking the soft peach silk shirt from our original wardrobe and the black pants and black skirt from the second set, we've added in a sequin trim cardigan and black dress, and of course, don't forget an evening clutch. Here are 9 outfits to wear out to more formal events.



Overall, we've added 19 garments and with those including our original 3 garments that we loved from our original wardrobe we've created 100+ outfits without breaking a sweat!

Hopefully you'll discover at least a few of these 19 extra garments already in your wardrobe when you start looking carefully, what is not there are your holes that you will need to put on your list.

There are even more mix and match options mixing up elements from each of these capsules as you can imagine (e.g. the white cardigan in the third capsule could also be included in the other capsules). This is the basis for creating capsules in your wardrobe to give you multiple outfit options.

You will find you need different capsules for different aspects of your life. Try and create at least one capsule for each of your Roles (that you wrote down in Step 2).

For those roles that take up a larger percentage of your time, then you'll need 2, 3 or 4 capsules to give you more variety. It's better to have 2 great capsules than 4 that don't work so well.

Ensure that each garment you keep and use in a capsule is a great colour and style. There is no point creating capsules with clothes you don't really love and that don't flatter you or fit your lifestyle. If you're not sure what suits you think about investing in an image consultation to help you find out what really suits you today.

As you're creating your capsules, take photos of each of the outfits, or use one of those new phone apps so that you have an easy reference guide so that you can quickly figure out what you're going to wear of a morning and know that you look great.



5. Know How and Where to Shop



You've now shopped your wardrobe, created the capsules you can, but you've probably discovered some holes that need to be filled to really make your wardrobe work for you.

Because you've done all this great homework, your shopping will now be carefully planned and analytical rather than emotional and unfocussed. This is great, your chance of wasting money has been reduced astronomically.

Budget

Before you take your list shopping, you need to decide on your budget.

How much should you spend? That question is very difficult to answer, but no more than 5- 10% of your annual income. The higher you are up the career ladder, the higher the quality of garment you need to purchase, but these should also last longer and you'll get better cost per wear for each garment.

Look at all your other costs of living and allocate a budget to your wardrobe. You have to start thinking about your wardrobe as an investment rather than a cost and invest wisely. The clothes you wear and image you project can really help you achieve your career and life goals. Don't underestimate the power of your clothes, but don't overspend and go into lots of debt. Clothes wear out and go out of fashion, so you don't want to overcapitalise on your wardrobe either.

Now split your annual budget up into seasons. Depending on the part of the world you live in you may need to split your budget into two or three portions to cover the seasons Summer, Winter, Spring/Autumn. If you live in a climate that has a long winter and short summer, put more of your budget toward your winter wardrobe.

It's unlikely in one shopping trip you'll find clothes for seasons other than the one you're currently in and the next. So put aside some of your money for a shopping trip in another few months' time when the seasons and store stock has changed.

Where to Shop

Now it's time to do some research. If you look at the pictures you pulled in Step 2, were there any that came from local shops or labels that you can easily find?

Maybe you need to go online and go through the websites of your local stores. Most chain stores have their garments on the web these days. This is a great way to look at the shapes and styles of clothing to see which shops are most likely to work for you and what you need.

Don't mind spending time searching? Think about thrift shops, outlet shops, discount designer stores, swap markets, eBay...



When to Shop

Try and avoid peak shopping times such as a Saturday afternoon. Instead, if you can go shopping when it's quiet in stores (my favourite time and day is a Tuesday morning, it's known as retail dead time). That way you get the regular staff (not the weekend casuals) and you get all the attention you desire.

Check out the stores catalogues, they usually advertise sales a week before it starts, find out when the clothes you want to buy will be reduced.

Ask local boutiques to put you on their list to contact you when they have a sale.

Try factory outlet stores, these days with the quick turnover of fashion you'll find that outlet stores have very recent stock in them.


Know what to splurge on and what to save on. Which fashions will last longest, and which will be gone in a short period of time? The more extreme the fashion, the shorter time it will be around, so if you really want a little bit of a trend, go for it, but buy cheap in a store like Target.



What to Buy

Look at the care label before you buy. If it's dry clean only, stay away, you'll be blowing your budget on upkeep, or you won't wear the garment because you know it must be dry cleaned, and that's just going to be waste sitting in your wardrobe.

Garments that are more classic or creative will last longer. The classic will last because they don't change so much year to year. The creative because they're a bit outside of fashion, not 'in' so not 'out' in a short period of time. Garments like trench coats and straight skirts will stay in fashion way longer and are more budget friendly than cape coats and gypsy skirts.

A photograph of a closet interior. On the left, a wooden hanger bar holds several leopard print garments. On the right, a zebra print garment hangs from a hanger. In the foreground, a pair of leopard print flip-flops and a black boot are visible on a light-colored wooden floor.

Obvious patterns can also date a garment (unless it's a classic print like stripes, checks, animal prints). Florals are always around but change markedly from year to year. Neutrals will last longer, spend more money on them as people notice the garment less, so you can get more wear out of it. This is why we love our black pants, or denim jeans. We can wear them day in, day out and nobody notices we're wearing the same garment over and over.

Try and find fabrics that can work through multiple seasons. This will get you more wear over a longer period rather than fabrics that are obviously either very light or very heavy (though you may find you need a few garments that fulfil these criteria).

Look for high quality garments, good construction, great fabrics. This will help your garments last longer and be better on your budget in the long run.

Only buy shoes that can be improved. These are man-made materials, once they're scratched or scuffed, can't be polished and improved. Sure, they're cheaper than leather to start with, but in the long run you will have to throw them out much more frequently which is not good for either your budget or the environment.

Splurge on

Look at the care label before you buy. If it's dry clean only, stay away, you'll be blowing your budget on upkeep, or you won't wear the garment because you know it must be dry cleaned, and that's just going to be waste sitting in your wardrobe.

- Quality jackets and pants in great neutral colours that work with your existing wardrobe
- A great bra or two. Foundations matter, a great bra will make your waist look slimmer.
- Good quality stylish shoes and boots that you find comfortable to wear for years to come.
- A trench coat that you'll wear season after season, year after year.
- Signature items. Do you always wear belts? Get the best quality you can find. Known for your animal prints? Don't buy ones that look cheap.

splurge on



Save on

- Costume jewellery. There are so many great places you can get costume jewellery these days for little. Jewellery can add interest and detail and focal points to your outfit and is important, but no need to buy everything in solid gold and diamonds!
- The latest fashion trends. Yes, sometimes it's great to update your wardrobe with a new piece that is of the moment, but don't spend too much, these garments won't be the ones you're wearing in a few year's time
- Patterned items. We get sick of patterns more quickly than solid colours, plus they go out of fashion faster. So, don't blow your budget on a patterned garments, the only exception to this is if it's a classic pattern such as stripes or animal print (and that's one of your signature prints).
- T-shirts that quickly can stretch out of shape or become discoloured.

save on



Some Final Tips



Alterations

Fix and alter what you have first rather than spending money on new. Often changing the buttons on a garment will give it a new and higher quality appearance. Get rid of those cheap plastic buttons and replace them with a higher quality button and your garment will get a new lease of life.

One of my favourite fixes for a knit top sleeve that is too long, rather than take it to a tailor, I just run some stitches up the seam and pull a little to create a small gather, that shortens the sleeves. You can also do the same on the body of the knit top by creating ruches that go up the side seams if the top is too long.

Get yourself a lint shaver and regularly go over your knits. Particularly around the under arm and sleeve areas which tend to gather pills quickly because of the friction of your arms rubbing against your body. This will keep knits looking fresher much longer.

If you find that the waist band on skirts and trousers gapes, take your garment to an alterations person, this is easily fixed and when it fits well you'll love wearing it a whole lot more.

One of the most common issues with fit is too long sleeves. Overly long sleeves will make the whole garment look too big. Get your jacket sleeves taken up by a professional so that it's beautifully done, and you'll find that the jacket looks a whole lot better on.



Repair

Get your shoes repaired – new soles and heels on shoes plus some polish will bring shoes back to life.

Boots are an investment piece. Regularly polish them and resole every few years. You'll easily get a decade out of them if you look after them.

Don't Forget Your List

The most important budget friendly shopping tip is to stick to your list. Not buying for emotional reasons (and this includes boredom) will really help to keep your budget under control. When you know what you have and what you need. When you understand your style words and what suits you, then it's so much easier to say no to all the garments that don't work for you and keep on searching til you find those pieces that are just right for you and fill your wardrobe needs.

I hope this Five Step Formula For A Fabulous Wardrobe On A Budget has helped you think about your wardrobe and what you need in a clearer way.

Do let me know how you go! Email me your comments, experiences and questions imogen@bespokeimage.au. I'd love to hear from you.

May your personality sparkle and shine through your style!

Imogen Lamport





Your Notes

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for taking notes.

GET A HEAD START ON DEFINING YOUR STYLE

Evolve Your Style - 31 Day Challenge

This fun 31 day style challenge that will get you out of your style rut

- Are you stuck in a style rut?
- Do you wish you were a little more adventurous or stylish but are not sure where to start?

Evolve Your Style is the ideal place to start discovering your style as you work through fun small daily style challenges which will have you evolving your style in only 31 days.



7 Steps to Style System

Discover your unique style so you can save money, feel confident and look fabulous every day! The answers to all your style questions are here!

- Are you sick of wasting money on clothes that don't suit you?
- Would you like a professional opinion on your body shape and colouring?
- Would you like to define your personal style?
- Would you like to know once-and-for-all what really suits you?
- Would you like to feel confident and discover your true beauty?

Then **7 Steps to Style** is the right next step on your journey to style. It's the most comprehensive and individualised program available that will assist you in discovering what really works for you so you are empowered and confident when you shop. You learn how to put together outfits that really work for you, your body, your colouring and your values along with my professional opinion to ensure that you get it right. Start feeling great about your style and see the positive impact it has on your life (and wallet).

Would you love to finally find your style and stop wasting money on the wrong clothes then [click here](#).

Plus we have so many great style resources in our shop to help you become more stylish every day. Check out our shop.