

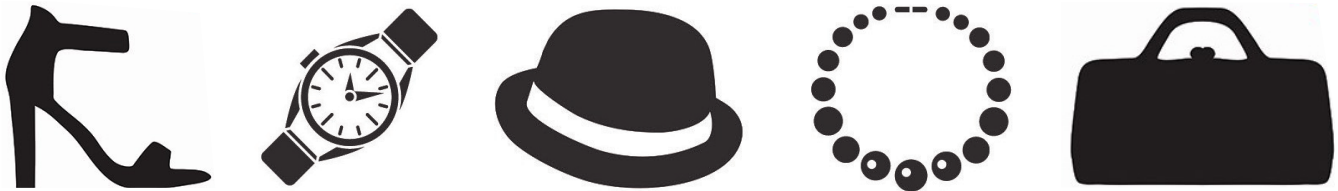
Wardrobe accessories: Eye-catching enhancements

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Jewelry, hats, scarves, ties, watches, glasses, shoes, belts, purses ... these wardrobe accessories are the key components to looking “stylish.” Wearing these add-ons can personalize or spruce up an everyday look. Accessories can help you become a different person each day, just by changing your shoes or jewelry. You can also achieve a “signature style” by wearing the same kind of accessory every day, such as a scarf or headband.

As fashion trends come and go, accessories can be an easy way to update your wardrobe. It is fine to have a few accessories that are “on trend,” combined with well-made, classic accessories that will always be in style. But how you wear or group accessories is just as important as the accessories themselves.



Design concepts

Accessories can call attention to a certain area of the body or magically draw it away. Therefore, it’s helpful to have a basic understanding of the elements and principles of design as they relate to accessories. Successfully applying these concepts can result in outfits that appear unified and pulled together.

Elements (related to accessories):

- Color – the lightness, darkness, brightness, or dullness of the color or hue (e.g., red) will impact how clothing and accessories coordinate. This contributes to the emphasis of certain areas of the body and the overall visual interest in the outfit.
- Texture – when mixing accessories with different surface appearances, such as smooth leather or fuzzy wool, you can experiment with unifying a look or creating variety.
- Line – this can refer to the outline of an object or the direction the eye follows based on how the wardrobe and accessories relate to each other.
- Shape and size – accessories are most flattering when kept in proportion with areas of the body near where they are worn.

Principles (related to accessories):

- Balance – equilibrium of “visual weight” or focus. Too much of a design element in one area may create unwanted emphasis of a body part or be unflattering.
- Rhythm – sense of movement created by the design elements. The eye should not focus on one area of the body longer than any other area.

- Proportion – the way in which the size, shape, or position of the accessories relate to each other, as well as the outfit and the wearer.
- Emphasis – the area of the outfit that is most dominant. What do you see first?

Styling tips and ways to accessorize

There is not a single or right way to wear accessories, but there are some general guidelines that can help you make flattering choices. Here are some suggestions:

- Accessories with a purpose can have the most impact. A distinctive purse or tote bag will add visual interest, a scarf or hat in a color that flatters your skin tone can brighten your day, eyeglasses in a design that best suits your face may lead to compliments.
- Think about the message you want to communicate with your outfit. Are you going for classic, sporty, casual, fun, or professional? Choose unique accessories to help you stand out among others dressed in the same style.
- Choose a statement piece or bold accessory, like an elaborate piece of jewelry, and base your outfit around it, so that your accessory becomes the focal point.
- Create a basic, everyday look by choosing uncomplicated accessories that blend with your outfit. You might choose a specific accessory for one area you want to highlight, such as a belt or high heels.
- Are you wondering if your accessories are “too much”? If you feel like you’re wearing a costume, you may have overdone it – so remove a piece or two.



Be confident

Getting accessories right may take some trial and error. You may need some time to get used to wearing accessories in ways you’re not accustomed. When you try a new look, remember, many people may be seeing you for the first time, so they may assume you always accessorize that way. Take advantage of that mindset, and “own” your look. It’s your choice to wear accessories that help you either stand out or blend in. If you are unsure about the accessories you are wearing, that’s OK; you can remove them later if you start to feel self-conscious. Be confident. Wear what you feel best in, and enjoy wearing special accessories every day.

For more detailed information about choosing and wearing accessories, ask your local University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Agent for our complete guide titled, “Accessories: The finishing touch” (FCS2-347).

References:

- *Accessories: The finishing touch* – FCS2-347. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- Erlanger, M. (2018). *How to accessorize: A perfect finish to every outfit*. Clarkson Potter.
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