

What can we learn from the clothes we buy but never wear?

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What is your favourite clothing? Why do you like it?
2. What is one type of clothing that you never wear? Why don't you like it?

2 Key words

a. Choose the correct word to match each definition below. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

1. a tall piece of furniture used to keep and hang your clothes
 - a. guilty
 - b. waste
 - c. wardrobe
2. a bad feeling when you did something wrong or did not do something that you should have done
 - a. waste
 - b. guilty
 - c. fancy
3. a poor or wrong use of money, time, energy, abilities, etc.
 - a. taste
 - b. guilty
 - c. waste
4. choices that you make about something after thinking about several possibilities
 - a. decisions
 - b. waste
 - c. fancy
5. something with a lot of decorations or bright colours
 - a. fancy
 - b. familiar
 - c. charity
6. something that is not correct or that produces a result that you did not want
 - a. charity
 - b. mistake
 - c. familiar
7. an organisation for helping people in need
 - a. taste
 - b. charity
 - c. fancy
8. a person's approval of and liking for particular things
 - a. decisions
 - b. questioning
 - c. taste

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9. well known to you or something that is seen or heard often and therefore easy to recognise

- a. charity b. familiar c. questioning

10. asking a person about something

- a. questioning b. tasting c. wasting

a. Complete the sentences with some words from the previous activity. You may have to change the form of the word.

1. After she lost her memory, nothing was _____ anymore.
2. It's such a(n) _____ to throw away clothes that could be repaired or donated.
3. Don't feel _____ about buying yourself something nice once in a while.
4. My _____ in fashion has changed a lot since I was a teenager.
5. It can be stressful to make a(n) _____ about what to wear for a job interview.
6. The store window had beautiful and _____ wedding gowns in the window.

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01 March, 2025

- 1 Most of us have clothes in our wardrobe that we never wear. I have a yellow dress that I bought about five years ago. I've worn it three times. Every time I open my wardrobe, I feel guilty that I bought a dress I didn't need or like. But I also feel bad for the dress, because it really is very pretty. That part sounds crazy, I know.
- 2 Like lots of us, I hate seeing stuff go to waste. I make dinners using up whatever is in the fridge. Even if no one is going to ask for my celery and beetroot risotto recipe, I still enjoy it.
- 3 I don't want to give up on the yellow dress. Why did I buy it if I don't want to wear it? If I don't even know what I want to wear, how will I make good decisions on more important things? And how can I make sure this doesn't happen again?
- 4 So a while ago, I started wearing the clothes that I hang on to but never actually wear. As well as the yellow dress, there's a blue jacket, a dark red skirt and a brown coat. I'm a couple of months in now, and here is what I've learned.
- 5 Firstly: the key to wearing them again is to try to remember why you liked them in the first place. What did you see in the mirror to make you hand over your card?
- 6 For me, it was about dressing up for little things that could be done in jeans and a jumper. I'm trying this, and you know what? There is something nice about wearing a fancy dress to go out and buy tomatoes.
- 7 Sometimes you've simply made a mistake. Once you accept that, you can give it to charity and move on. (Note to self: never, ever buy anything in an airport.) But often, the lesson is that your taste has changed. You still reach for clothing that feels familiar, but that person isn't you anymore.
- 8 As I get older, I wear colour a lot less, but I still like colourful clothes. I am trying not to shop for the person I was 15 years ago. In the meantime, I am questioning all the beige and trying to wear more colours again.
- 9 As the saying goes: sometimes you win, and sometimes you learn. Oh, and guess what I'm wearing today?

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First published in *The Guardian*, 01/03/2025

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What colour is the dress that the author has only worn three times?
2. What two feelings does the author have when she sees that dress?
3. What does the author hate to see?
4. Besides the yellow dress, what three clothing items does the author say she doesn't wear?
5. According to the author, what is the key to wearing the clothes you 'hang on to' again?
6. What did the author remember about why she bought the yellow dress?
7. What advice does the author give about clothing mistakes?
8. Where does the author say to never buy clothes?
9. What has the author noticed about colourful clothing as she gets older?
10. Who is the author trying not to shop for?

4 Key language

a. Match the phrasal verb to its definition.

move on dress up give up on use up

1. _____ : to accept that something has changed and be ready for new experiences
2. _____ : to finish a supply of something
3. _____ : to expect someone or something to fail
4. _____ : to put on fancy or formal clothes for a special event

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b. Complete the sentences with the phrasal verbs from the previous activity. You may have to change the form of the words.

1. The whole family got _____ for the wedding.
2. After the breakup, everyone told him to _____, but it took some time.
3. Never _____ your dreams, even when things get difficult.
4. Don't _____ all the hot water when you take a shower.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these quotes.

- 'Out with the old, in with the new.' —Unknown
- 'The less you own, the less owns you.' —Chuck Palahniuk
- 'Letting go is even more important than adding.' —Marie Kondo

6 In your own words

a. Reflect on your personal style and fashion preferences. Answer these questions.

- How have your clothing tastes and styles changed with age?
- How did you choose new clothing, shoes or accessories ten years ago? How do you choose now?
- How do you think clothing tastes and styles will change in another ten years?
- What's a fashion mistake you made?
- What's one fashion trend you hope returns?

b. Share your reflections with the class. Compare tastes, styles, preferences and predictions with your classmates.