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Clothing Resale: A Buyer's Guide

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Clothing Resale: A Buyer's Guide

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Like all other necessities of life, the cost of new clothing has risen astronomically in the last few years. Not surprisingly, this rise has been accompanied by a growing popularity of clothing resale outlets. Once confined to the annual church rummage sale, the perennial Goodwill and Salvation Army outlets, and an occasional moving sale, the business of selling used clothing has mushroomed into an industry and is rapidly becoming a way of life.

At the heart of this growth is a recent cultural acceptance of buying and wearing used clothes. For many years, people have given used maternity, baby, and children's clothes to friends and relatives. The short period of need for these items, the trend toward smaller families, and rising retail prices made this a sensible practice. Perhaps it was easier to offer and accept these "hand-me-downs" when the reason for disuse was so obvious. However, with ordinary clothes that still fit, it was a more complex matter to give them away, except for charity. Most people who donated their clothes to charity never would have considered buying anything from the same source.

Now, however, the volunteers in charity-run thrift stores happily search through the racks for

themselves. New kinds of resale outlets have emerged to serve an increasingly diverse market. The desire for both variety *and* quality, which few can satisfy at today's retail prices, can be satisfied at resale sources. The old image of second-hand clothes is rapidly changing into a cultural phenomenon of clothing exchange and reuse.

This trend not only helps the individual battle inflation, it also supports a large-scale effort to conserve natural resources. We are entering an era in which conservation will be the overriding consideration in every sphere of activity. The fact is that fossil fuel is consumed during the production of any new product. Eventually we will be faced with the prospect of using all available resources, including useable clothing. For most of us, the need for novelty will be fulfilled in the exchange of unused clothing for serviceable garments which have worn out their visual interest for someone else.

This need not be boring. The world of resale is already varied enough in tastes and prices to serve a wide range of needs. Moreover, as the resale market expands, an even greater variety is likely to develop. Until then, enough choices exist to warm the hearts of bargain-hunters everywhere.

Resale Outlets

Household Sales

People no longer wait to move to have a sale. Garage, porch, and yard sale signs spring up like crocuses through the last remnants of winter snow, and keep on coming until frost. For some, it is a yearly event; the natural consequence of spring cleaning. Students of human nature will love the variety in each household's collection of castoffs. A more recent trend is a joint sale by several families, usually neighbors. Household sales offer the widest range of quality and prices. However, the prices are usually lower than anywhere else. Estate sales are often organized by professionals, with higher prices as a result. Quality finds are more likely, however.

Organizational Rummage Sales

The rummage sale is becoming a popular mode of fund-raising by community groups of all kinds, including the church groups which made them famous. These sales are usually like household sales in price, and like thrift stores in quality.

Thrift Stores

Business is booming at thrift stores whose names are synonymous with resale. Salvation Army, Goodwill, and Veteran's Thrift Stores have expanded their operations and opened up branch stores. Shoppers will find organized stock, decent quality, low prices, and even dressing rooms in most places. Watch for privately-owned thrift stores also. The quality and prices will vary with the owner.

Vintage Clothing Stores

There was a time when 30- and 40-year-old items could be had for nickels and dimes. Value is in the eye of the beholder, and few people saw much value in these attic-stuffers. Now however, the fashion trend for old styles has created a market for these treasures, and a new type of resale store has emerged to accommodate it. You might get lucky at the thrift store, but these are rare finds. More people watch for them, and fewer give them up. In the vintage specialty store, the prices reflect the cost of searching for them. Antique stores usually have a rack of vintage clothing. Some of these styles merge easily with current clothes, but many are special-event costumes, on the fringe of acceptance for everyday wear.

Moderate-Priced Resale Stores

Clothing for the mainstream can be found in a different kind of resale store, created by a new mar-

ket: recent used cloths at moderate prices. These stores may be privately-owned, or they may be fundraisers for charity, staffed by volunteers, and stocked by donation or consignment. What is really interesting about these places is that they are patronized by the same people who stock them, thereby becoming a true exchange. The prices are higher than the old-fashioned thrift store, but lower than retail items at sale prices. Thus, they are affordable as an alternative to inexpensive ready-to-wear. The quality and the environment make them acceptable to those who can afford comparable items new, but who love a bargain.

Designer Resale Stores

Actually, what exists is a continuum from moderate-priced stores to those carrying designer clothes as well. Those offering a large percentage of designer and expensive ready-to-wear clothes are a new phenomenon in resale. The prices are comparable to moderate-priced retail; but considering the original prices, they are still bargains. Here too, the stores are patronized by those who bought the items new, as well as by those who could not otherwise afford them. Sometimes items are offered for resale the same season as they were purchased new. Generally, resale is within two years of the original purchase.

Retail and Resale: A Mixed Bag of Bargains

Another new development in resale is the merging of used garments with discounted new ones. These may be retail overstocks, the remains of clearance or going-out-of-business sales, factory irregulars, or designer samples. Generally, these items are comparable in quality and price to the used items sold in the same store. As acceptance of resold clothing becomes more pervasive, used items may begin to invade retail establishments. A precedent exists from the early seventies in the retail sale of used jeans with the prized "faded" look.

Consignment Stores

Many charity-run outlets depend on donations for their stock, while vintage stores often buy things outright. However, an increasing proportion of resold clothing is sold on consignment. This means the original owner gets a percentage of the money paid for them if, and when, they sell. Most moderate-priced and designer resale stores, as well as some vintage stores, fall into this category.

Consignment sales allow people to clear their closets of unused items which they feel are too valuable to give away. This type of operation must

charge enough to pay the original owner of the clothes, as well as support the store. The store's costs are minimized by the lack of an initial investment in stock, with its inherent risk of unsold goods. Unsold items are simply returned or donated to charity as previously agreed.

Generally, consignment stores require garments to be clean and in good repair. Some require hangers, and most stipulate that garments be in "current" fashion, although a great deal of variation exists in what is considered "current." Often there are time restrictions. Garments are limited in their time on the floor, first at full price, and then at a reduced price. Many places also have seasonal restrictions, clearing out their spring and summer offerings in August and bringing in fall and winter clothes just as retail stores do.

Consignment Rules:

Garments are screened for the following traits:

- cleanliness
- condition
- style

Other limitations:

- Time kept in store.
- Seasonal appropriateness.

Standards and rules vary among stores.

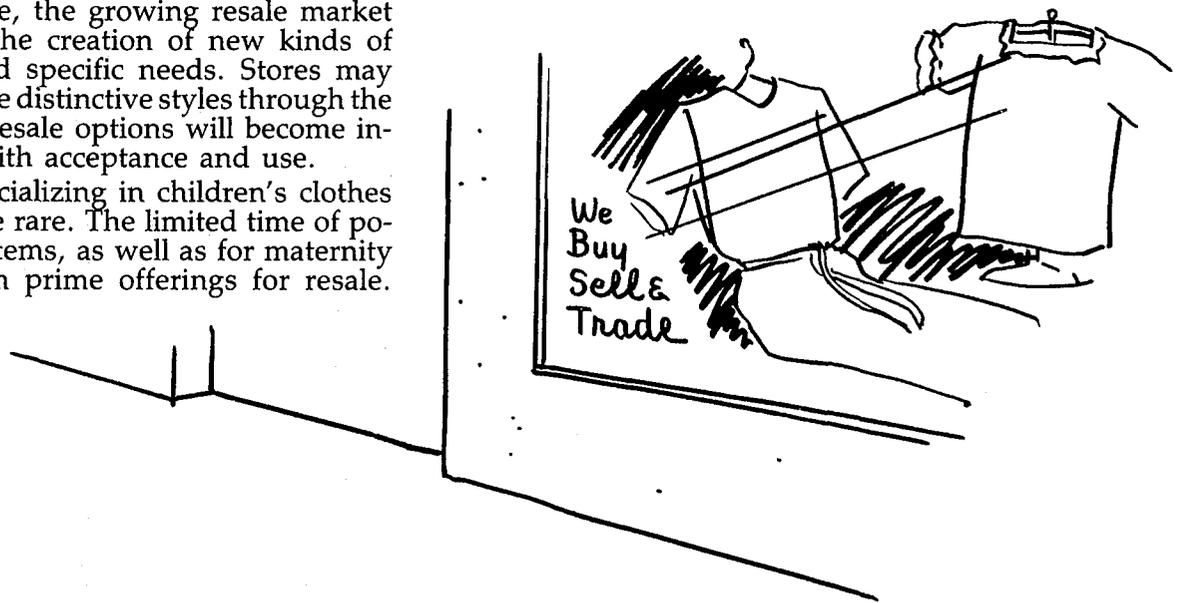
Future Varieties of Resale Stores

In the near future, the growing resale market will probably spur the creation of new kinds of stores geared toward specific needs. Stores may even begin to cultivate distinctive styles through the screening process. Resale options will become increasingly diverse with acceptance and use.

Resale stores specializing in children's clothes do exist, but they are rare. The limited time of potential use of these items, as well as for maternity clothes, makes them prime offerings for resale.

Many stores geared to a general clientele don't carry them at all. Children's clothes are often found in a large, inconvenient pile of mixed sizes. Good, used maternity clothes are hard to find. The free exchange of these items among family and friends probably accounts for their shortage in resale. However, this system becomes impractical over long distances, and not everyone has friends and relatives with children slightly older and the same sex as their own! Specialty stores selling these clothes are long overdue.

The most evident shortage in resale is in larger size clothing. For women's clothes, this is size 14 and up. Resale merchants speculate that people who are even slightly overweight try not to think about their bodies and prefer not to spend money on clothes. Thus they tend to wear out their clothes before they get to the resale rack. Resale proprietors lament the lack of these items, convinced that they could sell them about as quickly as they came in. If more people would clear out their closets of large-sized, unused clothes, they would find a ready market. Those in the process of losing weight could gain inspiration with a new look which is affordable. Clothes could be "traded-in" as they became too large, for "new" clothes in smaller sizes. Like pregnancy, size change during weight loss is a temporary condition which could be well-served by clothing resale.



The Sizing of Used Clothes

Standard Sizing

Perhaps the trickiest part of shopping for used clothes is the question of size and fit. The first thing to realize is that standard sizing is not an exact science. Even when garments are new, a great deal of variation exists among garments labeled the same

size. Manufacturers have a set of *voluntary* guidelines for some measurements which are supposed to represent the dimensions of an average body form. In the transition from body measurements to garment measurements there is room for a wide range of interpretation of those guidelines.

Ease: Room for Interpretation

Between the size of a garment and the size of a person who wears it, is an allowance of extra room called "ease." *Style ease* is the amount added for the fashion or look of a garment. Think of the way a peasant blouse fits as opposed to a body shirt, or a slim skirt versus a gathered one. In recent years, style ease has been added even to the shoulders and armholes of many garments. Style ease can greatly enlarge the range of sizes which might fit you.

The other kind of ease is usually called *wearing ease*. This is the extra room needed to go around the body comfortably and allow for basic movement. Here too, the experts don't agree on how much wearing ease is necessary; so, the range of interpretation is quite broad. It is well known that the manufacturers of expensive lines tend to cut their sizes generously in order to flatter their customers. By the same token, manufacturers of inexpensive lines might cut costs by skimping on wearing ease. So, for a variety of reasons, if you usually wear a size 12, a used garment labeled size 10 or even 8 might fit perfectly.

Standards Have Changed

Another thing to know about standard sizing is that the dimensions associated with the numbers have changed over the years. Standard Misses sizes began as an extension of children's age sizes. Consequently, size 16 was originally intended to represent the dimensions of an average sixteen-year-old! The combination of style ease and wearing ease, along with the complex psychology of people identifying with certain sizes, has gradually increased the dimensions of all sizes across the board. This may be important if your tastes run to vintage clothes. It is unlikely that older clothes will carry

size information in the labels. However, the original owner may have known the size.

When a size is still present in the label, it should be used only as an indicator of size, but not the *sole* indicator. One reason to sell or give away clothes is that they have shrunk and no longer fit. It is definitely a mistake to assume that the size on the label is accurate, or that all size 14's are alike.

What Size Is It?

When a size label is not present, most places which organize clothes by size ask the owner for the size of his or her clothes. For some people, this is a very touchy subject, like asking their age or weight. They might bring in a range of sizes, say 10-14, and tell the salesperson that they are all size 10's, or even 8's. Some proprietors are aware of this problem and try to estimate the right size if they are in doubt. However, most sellers just take the person's word for it.

In many places, there is no organization by size at all. Some designate small, medium, and large categories, but you might find some very small and some very large items in the medium section.

Look for What You Like

The bottom line is that a lot of variation exists in the sizing of new garments and even more variation can be found in used garments. Start by looking in the size category which seems to describe you, but don't confine yourself to a narrow range. The rule of thumb is to look first for what you like, and then worry about fit.

Suggestions for Judging Fit

You Can't Always Try Things On

The most obvious way to find out if something fits is to try it on. There is no substitute for trying on a garment and looking in a full-length mirror with another one behind you for a back view. However, there may or may not be such a set-up available in a resale outlet. Generally speaking, designer shops, vintage shops, and moderate-price stores will have a dressing room with at least one full-length mirror. Most inexpensive places will have one also, but you can't count on it. Some household sale owners may let you go into the house to try something on.

Time Is Money

Even if there is a dressing room, however, time is another consideration. When it comes to buying used clothing, time truly is money. The very best finds take several visits to the same place, or visits to several places, and everywhere, thorough searching through all the racks, barrels, bins, and tables. A retail store is limited to a few styles in a range of sizes, but a resale source is stocked with hundreds of one-of-a-kind items. You can't take everything back to the dressing room with you, not without losing out on that juicy item in the next rack, the next store, or the next sale, that you never got to.

Holding Things Up to You

There are some things which you won't be able to size by trying on. You can't try those jeans on in public, and you can't drag the whole rack back to the dressing room. What you can do is hold things up to you in order to get an idea of width and length. This is a bit trickier than try-ons, but a little advance preparation will help make your judgments more accurate.

If you are not going to try things on, be sure to observe the length when you hold them up.

- Finding Your Halfway Point

When garments are held up flat, they are actually folded in half, that is, the width of the garment which you see is actually half of the total circumference of any given part. You can greatly increase your accuracy in judging size quickly by locating the halfway point of your most crucial circumference. People require different widths front and back, so a general idea of where a side seam should be will not be accurate enough.

Take a strip of paper and wrap it around yourself at crucial places, marking the place where it overlaps. Cut off the overlap, fold it in half and place it over the front half of your body where you just "measured." Move it so the ends are in the same location at each side. Now press your fingers into your sides at this point and try to feel exactly where it is. This is where the folded garment held against you will have to reach, without pulling or straining, in order to fit. Test it out with some of your own garments so you can really get a good idea of where that side location is.

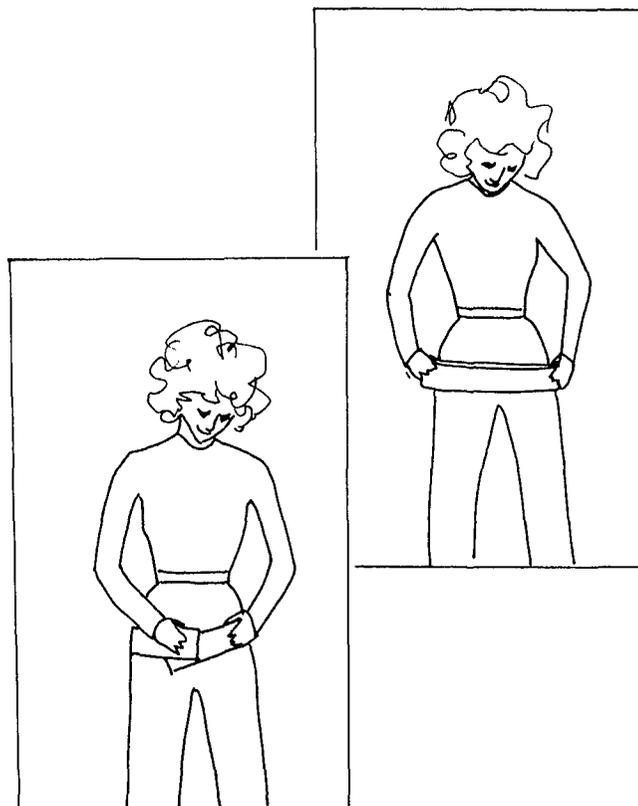


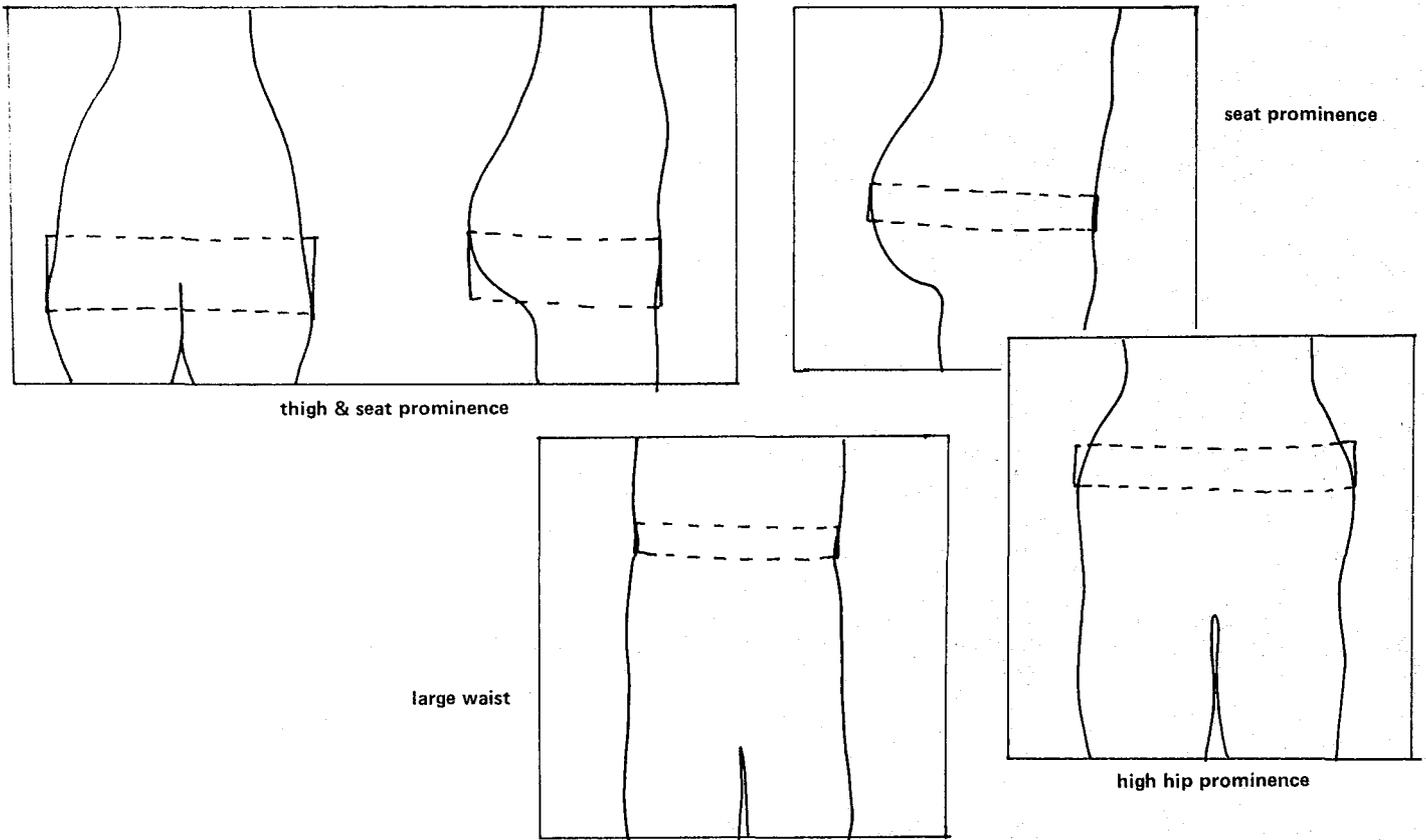
On-The-Spot Try-Ons

One way to save time is to try things on right there. Wear a light-weight, form-fitting, knit top, with a simple crew neck, and you can try on shirts, blouses, sweaters, jackets, and even some dresses right on the spot. Turtle necks make your neck too large and cowls get in the way, so keep the style of your shopping outfit simple. In a T-shirt, men can try on everything except pants. Most resale stores have full-length mirrors available on the floor for this purpose but not always. They may be in a distant section, or you may just find those round mirrors mounted high up on an angle to prevent shoplifting. Although far from ideal, these too can be used to help judge fit.

Another suggestion is to shop with a friend. That way, you always have a friendly "mirror" around to tell you how things look and to help you make decisions.

The important thing, though, is to cultivate a sense of how things feel when they fit. Try on your own shirts, blouses, jackets, etc., and try to observe how they feel, how much roominess feels comfortable and looks good. Chances are, if you like it, and it feels right, it will look good too.





• Which Circumference Is Crucial?

Chances are, you already know where it is; it's the place which seems to be too large for the garment when everything else fits. For many women, the most important place to check is at the seat and thigh levels. Use a strip of paper about 6" wide. The

width is needed because the most prominent areas of the thighs and buttocks are not at the same level. You want the strip to reflect the width needed to cover both.

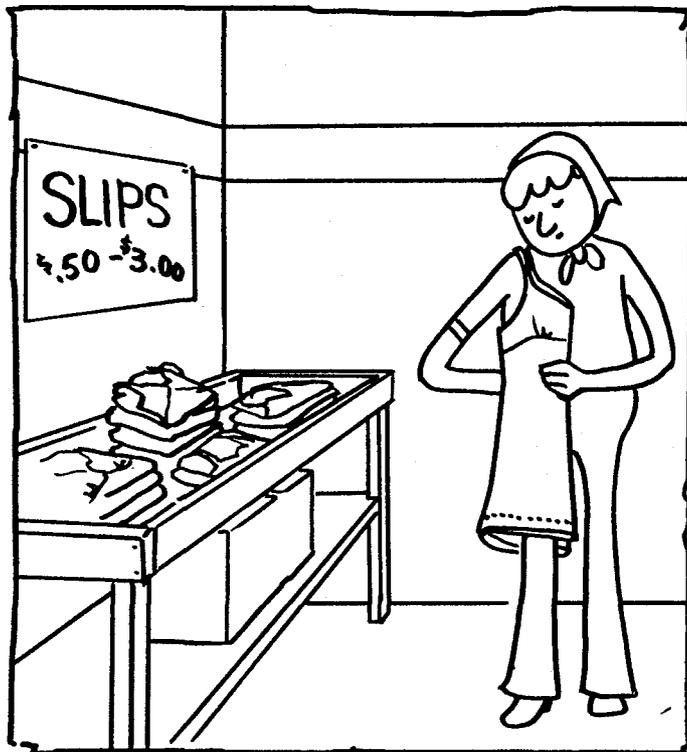
Sometimes a large or muscular buttocks can cause fitting problems for people of either sex. When there is no thigh prominence, place a 3" strip at the level of greatest prominence looking at the body from the side.

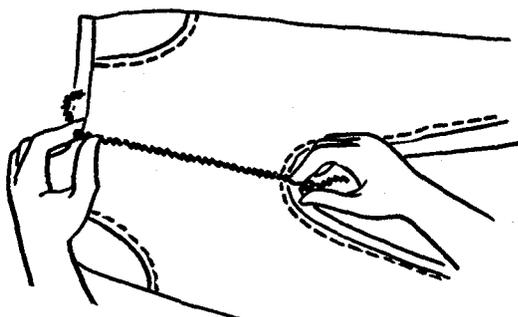
One place which is often crucial for both men and women is the area at the navel level, just at and just above the hip bones. For men, this is the waist level of pants; for women, this is the rounded area just below the waist. Some women may find that the waist circumference is more crucial. Here too, a 3" strip is sufficient.

When standard sizes seem to fit with little trouble, men should check the waist, and women should check the seat level of garments.

• Refolding The Garment and Holding It Up To One Side

Another way to judge the size of a garment is to refold it matching the side seams, and to hold it up to the side of the body. It should reach the center of front and back. This will be affected by the thickness of the fabric, and construction features such as a fly-front zipper. Try it out with your own clothes for a better idea of where the garment must reach. This takes more time than holding things up in front, as garments are usually folded with front and back flat, but it may be easier for you to judge the center of front and back than the halfway point at the sides.





Checking the Crotch Length of Pants

Holding things up may be all the fitting you need for skirts, but pants present another problem. If you are not going to try them on, you must check the crotch length. You may be able to judge what you need visually by studying the crotch length of your own clothes. Match up the center back and center front; then flatten the crotch seam as much as possible. Study the length of the seam, or check with a measuring tape. Some people use a cord or string for this purpose. If you use something of this nature for a measuring device, be sure that it is not stretchy. Women may find that the crotch length of jeans, which ride the top of the hipbones, is shorter than the crotch length of pants which fit to the waist. Several pairs should be studied and/or measured because styles vary.

Cultivate An Eye for Size

In general, it is helpful to cultivate an eye for size, if only as a preliminary screening process. Garments look surprisingly wider when they are folded flat than when they are worn. Study the dimensions of garments which fit well so that you can recognize the size visually. This ability is extremely helpful when shopping for someone who is not with you.



Take Along a Garment Which Fits

If you don't trust your eye, and you don't want to measure, you can simply take along a garment or garments which fit well. This will work for you or for other people who are not with you. If you do bring garments with you, be sure to show them to the sales people when you come in and explain why you brought them. Otherwise, they may want to charge you for them later.

In summary, cultivate an eye for size for rapid screening, hold things up to you, or compare them to other garments for a general idea of fit; try things on for the best idea of fit. Whatever you do, don't be limited by the size designations in the store; don't trust the label completely, and be a little skeptical when the household sale owner tells you that all her clothes are size 10.

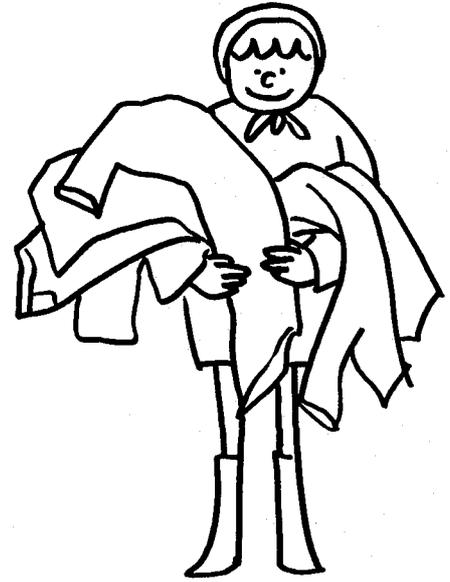
Suggestions for Judging Fit

Before You Go:

- Study the visual size and observe the feel of garments which fit.
- Measure or take them along for better accuracy.
- Find your halfway point at crucial circumferences.
- Dress for easy public try-ons.

While Shopping:

- Show garments from home to the salespeople when you come in.
- Start with your usual size designation, but don't stop there.
- Look first for what you like.
- Screen visually for size.
- Hold things up, measure, or compare to other garments for a general idea of fit.
- If possible, try things on, on the spot.
- Just before checkout time go to the dressing room last and try on all your best prospects in one session.



Shopping

Veteran resale shoppers don't need much advice, but for many people, the world of used clothing presents confusion and difficulties which can be cleared up with a few simple suggestions. Sometimes the sheer number of different items can be overwhelming. There is a tendency to just glance over the rack or table and decide that you don't see anything there. Every item deserves at least a split-second appraisal. On the other hand, a slow, laborious process of looking over every item could take hours and be extremely discouraging. Remember, time is money in a resale source. True finds are rare and take a lot of looking. The faster you learn to weed through things, the more finds you'll come across.

Moving Right Along

One way to save time is to go through a rack at breakneck speed. Don't think about each item separately; just move them along mechanically as if you were trying to move the whole row down 5", one garment at a time. As you flip them past, you get a chance to feel the fabric and get a split-second look at the same time. Don't worry about passing something good. You will be amazed at how fast your eye will tell you hand to slow down. When something strikes your fancy, you'll find yourself pausing for a closer look.

This technique is less applicable when items are folded in piles on a table, but you can pick up the whole pile and go through them quickly from the bottom up. When you go from the top down, you don't know where to put things and you rarely make it through the whole pile. When things are in bins or barrels, at least you don't have to worry

about keeping them neatly arranged. Try to maintain the same attitude of looking quickly, one at a time. Have confidence that something worthwhile will catch your eye.

Look for a Reason to Reject It

When you do pause over something, keep on looking until you find a reason to reject it: a tear or stain, the size, the style, the fabric. Keep on looking and you will probably come across the reason that it was rejected by the original owner. When you find it, you might reject it also, or you might think it's not that bad, or you can fix it. If you don't find anything after careful searching, then it was probably rejected out of boredom, or because of ill fit.

Part of your appraisal at this time should be a visual screening for size. In most cases, it takes seconds to reject something. When this happens, go right back to your rapid movement through the rack. If you are looking through a table, barrel, or bin, put aside potential items for a closer look after the rapid screening.

Hang On to the Finds

When you do find something, hold it up, measure it, or try it on right there if possible. If it still seems like a good prospect, hold onto it as you continue shopping. It might not be there if you leave it and go back for it later. Don't try to make a final decision until you are ready to leave.

Visit the Dressing Room Last

If you do plan to visit the dressing room, it should wait until you have done all your looking

and screening. The dressing room try-on should be confined to a single session just before checkout time.

You Can Have It Altered

Under certain circumstances, you might consider buying something which does not fit. Most people can handle simple alterations, such as taking up the hem. If you can't, you can have it done for a small amount. Further alterations can be done by professionals, but the cost will often exceed the resale price. Major alterations can involve taking the

whole garment apart. Sometimes, even then it is not possible to make drastic changes in size. You should consider having alterations done on a garment only under the following conditions:

- It is worth not only the resale price but the price of the alterations as well. The fabric should be in excellent condition and worth the effort of renovation.
- You are certain that the alteration needed is possible. Don't take chances unless you have some knowledge of clothing construction and/or alterations.

Final Decisions

Price and Need: A Delicate Balance

Now it's checkout time and you have some decisions to make. You will have to weigh the balance between your needs and the price. It's very interesting how the price of something can often determine whether or not you need it. You might snatch it up at three dollars, but easily walk away from it at ten. When it comes to used clothing, the textbook principles of supply and demand reigns supreme. Unlike new clothing, which has stable cost factors, used clothes are worth what people are willing to pay, or what sellers are willing to accept. Actually, there are three parts to a price for used clothes:

- what the individual buyer feels it is worth
- what the market will bear
- what the seller feels is adequate compensation for parting with it

As a buyer, the more informed you are about the going rate for comparable items, the better you can gauge what something is worth to you. Be sure to mentally include additional costs, such as alterations or dry-cleaning.

Cost Per Use

Another consideration is how much something will cost you for each wearing. For example, if a dress costs ten dollars and you know you'll only wear it once or twice, then you have to ask yourself if it's worth five or ten dollars per wearing. Maybe it is! On the other hand, if a coat costs thirty dollars, but you know that you will wear it all winter for several years, then it might be a better buy than something less expensive which is limited to certain occasions by style or other factors.

Will You Wear It?

The real question is, will you wear it? There is a tricky trap in buying used clothes; it's the feeling that for two dollars, you can't go wrong. Don't believe it! You can go wrong if you buy something that you never wear. One way to avoid that trap is to ask yourself if you will wear it *this month*. If it is an unseasonable item, will you wear it the first month the weather makes it appropriate? If you can't say yes, pass it up. Unless, of course, it's just so unusual, so funky, so much fun, or such a steal, that you just have to have it. There is no better place than a resale outlet to satisfy those kinds of cravings. Most of the time though, you'll find yourself feeling that you could take it or leave it. If you can't visualize yourself wearing it soon, you might as well leave it.



General Suggestions

Don't Shop When You're "Hungry"

Another kind of trap is a feeling of desperation for something to wear right away. In a resale outlet treasures come and go with little regularity, and you can't always count on finding something when you need it. Going shopping when you are desperate for something to wear is like going to the supermarket when you are hungry. Everything looks better than it would if you were full.

Get Into the Habit

It's much better to just shop resale outlets as a pastime; if you find something, great, but if not, it doesn't matter. It's a good idea to get into the habit of stopping at your favorite places or hitting the household sales on a regular basis. Finding things that are really special is often a matter of being there when they come in. Frequent places which are conveniently located near your house or job, or somewhere along your route. That way, you can stop in often. If it seems that a particular place never has anything in your size, or anything you like, then look for another place. Experience will soon lead you to a couple of favorites. Don't be too quick to judge, though. One week, there will be nothing in a certain place, but then the next, you may find a cartload of goodies. Household sale shoppers may find that certain neighborhoods are particularly good for finding things. Whatever pattern you develop, regularity is the key. If you are at all smitten with the resale bug, this will be a form of entertainment and relaxation. Also, you may find things that you would have overlooked if you were focused on finding something in particular.

When To Go

The very best time to go to a household sale is when it opens. Read the ads to find out when sales start, and don't forget the neighborhood paper, if you have one in your area. It's rude to show up an hour early, but if you get there at the scheduled time, you can look over the collection before it gets thinned out. You may want to stop by again at the end of a particularly good sale. People often sell

things by the bag during the last hours. Resale stores sometimes have bag sales also, or other special sales. This is the kind of information you will get by being a "regular." Moderate-priced stores and designer stores often have mailing lists for announcing such sales. Ask at your favorite places.

Where To Go

It helps to compile a list of resale sources in your area. If your directory has yellow pages, look under "Second-Hand Stores." Many stores are not listed in the yellow pages, so keep your eyes open for them as you travel around town. When you spot one, try to remember the exact name. You can look up the address in the white pages when you get home. Also look in the white pages under "Salvation Army," "Goodwill Industries," and "Veteran's Thrift Store."

Make a list of all these places with separate columns for name, address, telephone number, hours of operation, and comments about each.

When you are ready to go shopping, use your list to plan an efficient route, visiting several places in the same area.

Similarly, you can plan your itinerary for a garage sale blitz. Underline the addresses in the household sale ads and pick out several in the same neighborhood. Take the paper along in case you have time for more.

SHOP	PHONE	HRS.	MTWTFSS	Comments
Trading Box	330-1111		10-2	small hats, bags
253 Zeno S.			Fri 10-2:30	
Uniques	811-0130		M-F	New Styles
1313 Riches N.			12-4	
At's New to Me	901-1877		Thru Fri	Selection never call list
27th N.E.			9-5	
			Fri 12-5	

Haggling

A Rare Form of Human Contact

Veteran resale shoppers make it a habit to establish a good rapport with sellers. This isn't as mercenary as it sounds. Haggling is something like a game, but it is also a very real and direct form of human interaction which we rarely experience in

our culture. Like an old-fashioned marketplace, haggling is a confrontation of values in a very real exchange of goods for money. Enjoy it for what it is. It might make you wish you could negotiate at the supermarket checkout, or make an offer on your heating bill.

Why Not Make An Offer?

In a large organization, like the Salvation Army, the prices are fixed, and the sellers have no control over them. However, in a one-of-a-kind resale store, or at a household sale, the prices may be more fluid. If it means the difference between buying something or not, then why not make an offer? The seller will let you know if prices are negotiable. He/she might make a counter offer. Then the game is on, and only you can decide what it's worth to you.



What's It Worth To You?

Is it worth five dollars, but not six? Only you can decide. Don't be unreasonable, though; offer something "within walking distance" of the price marked. If you think things are grossly overpriced, don't bother. There is a limit to where people are willing to come down in price. The seller will have to consider what is needed to compensate for parting with it, and whether or not it can be sold for

more to someone else. For special items, you might want to leave your name and phone number, just in case it remains unsold, and the seller wants to reconsider your offer.

The Time Factor

Generally speaking, the owners of household sales are fairly receptive to haggling. Whereas a resale store will be there long enough to wait for higher prices, the household sale usually has a time limit. It might make a difference when you make your offer; the closer it is to the end of the sale, the more likely you are to get discounts.

How's It Going?

Another factor in haggling is how the sale is going. If it is well-attended, and things are selling well at the asking prices, you might not get far with your offer. But if the place is deserted, and it's starting to rain, the seller might be willing to negotiate.

It All Adds Up

One of the most successful ways to haggle is to buy several items and make an offer for the works. Few people can resist a ten-dollar bill coming in and an armload of unwanted items going out. Don't buy a lot of stuff that you don't need, but if you do hit a really good sale, or a good day at the resale store, try it. Pile all those things in front of the seller and offer a rounded-off amount; you would be surprised how round it can be! If the seller won't budge, then take the time to reconsider each item separately.

Be A Good Sport

Unless you know that prices are not negotiable, it never hurts to ask, especially if you ask politely, smile sincerely, and offer something reasonable. And, be a good sport no matter how it turns out.

Health Considerations

Large organizations usually screen for visual cleanliness. Some item may be washed or dry cleaned prior to sale. However, no organization routinely cleans every item. Neither the State of Minnesota, nor either of the Twin Cities has any health regulations regarding the sale of used clothing. Chances are there are no such regulations in your area.

According to state health officials, the only potential health hazard is a remote chance of lice or scabies mite infestation. Both are destroyed by the heat of a hot-water washing, or the chemicals used in dry-cleaning. When items cannot take a hot-wa-

ter wash, and dry-cleaning is too expensive, another method can be used. Double-bagging clothes in tightly-closed plastic bags for two weeks will eliminate any parasites.

Health officials recommend a hot-water washing for all underwear. If the fabric can't take it, nylon for example, bag it for two weeks and then wash in the appropriate temperature. Washable clothing for people with sensitive skin, including all babies and young children, should be laundered to remove any traces of harsh detergents or other irritants.

Fashion

No discussion of clothing resale is complete without some consideration of fashion; after all, most people associate fashion with new clothes. Although they do have considerable influence, clothing manufacturers do not control fashion, and neither do fashion designers. Fashion is really a matter of what people wear. It has an effect upon, and is affected by all our clothing choices. At the heart of fashion is the desire for new interest in a context that is familiar.

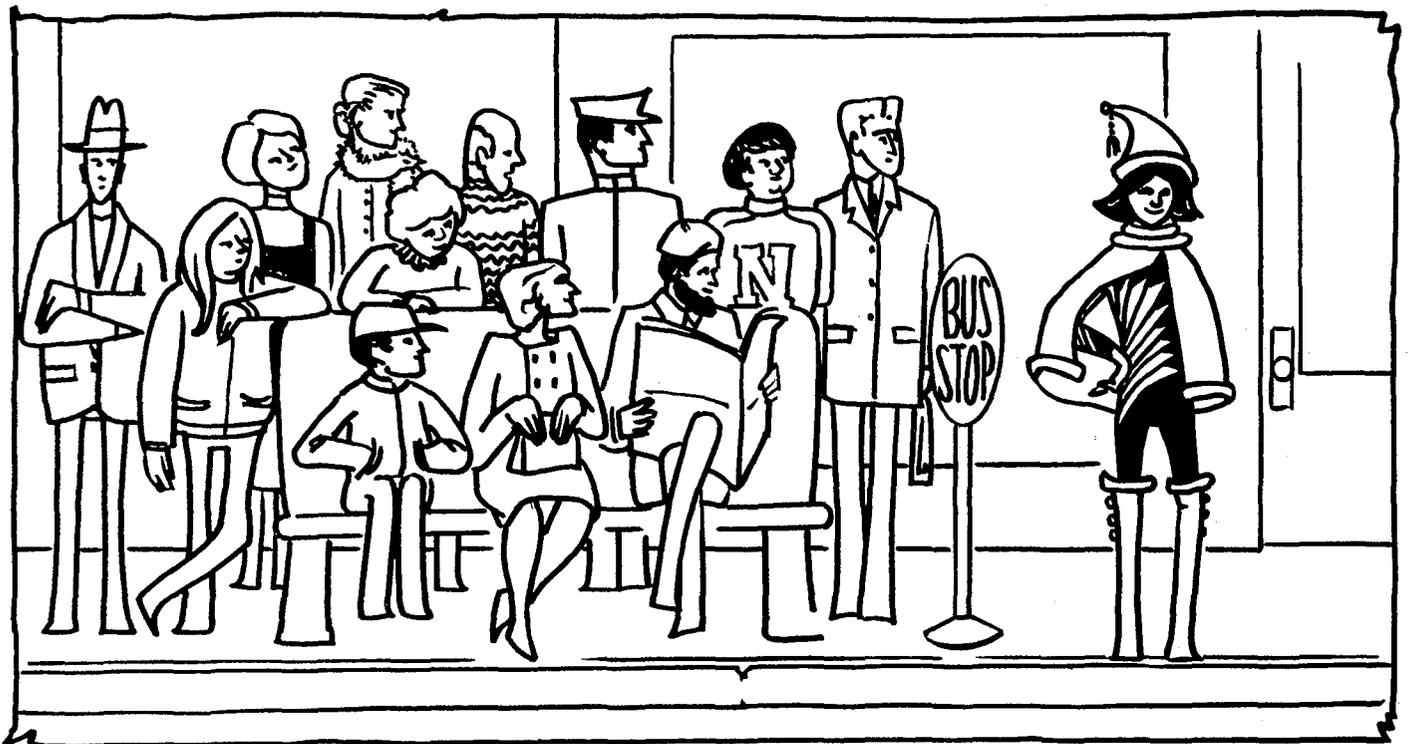
That which we have all seen is familiar, but may be boring; that which is strange may be exciting, but unacceptable. The best balance of these two elements is something which looks familiar, but new in some way. It is the familiar aspect of a style which provides the continuity of fashion cycles, while the new feature becomes the impetus, as well as the direction for change.

Needless to say, that which is familiar, as well as that which is new, varies tremendously depending on where you go, whom you see, and how you see yourself. Thus people belonging to different peer

groups will have different ways of dressing appropriately. Clothing is part of a lifestyle which necessarily includes other people. Differences are a matter of which people are included.

On the other hand, the world is small enough so that different groups are by no means distinct. Every person you see becomes a visual stimulus making something strange more familiar. Sheer exposure to repeated visual images of other people's clothing will have a cumulative effect on the choices you make for yourself. Certain aspects of dress are shared by a given culture, regardless of the group. These shared limits give the power of shock value to an outrageous fad.

While the extremes might be avoided by most, they do serve to expand the limits of dress, and thereby move the whole spectrum along in some way. Sometimes a change comes from the top down, as a designer trend which influences ready-to-wear styles at all economic levels. Sometimes it comes from the side, so to speak, from a fringe group, such as the extremes of punk fashion. Some-



times, though, the change comes from the bottom up, as sheer numbers wearing a given image affect the cultural parameters of acceptance for everyone. We didn't start out with designer jeans. The jeans story began with a lot of people wearing them, and wearing them, until they became so ingrained in our shared experience that they emerged with designer labels.

Most likely, the same thing happened with the "retro" trend; that is, new fashions with obvious references to past eras. Nostalgia for past fashions is not new, but never have the revivals come so close to the original occurrence of the style. The look came first from those vintage finds, and only later emerged as retro revivals. Retro is supposedly over now, but the current "preppy" look with pleated skirts, blazers, crew neck sweaters, and even penny loafers comes right out of the early sixties. Hemlines are going up again, so don't tear up your miniskirts for braided rugs. If you can't wear them when they come back in vogue, you may be able to sell them on consignment.

Clothing resale could have a major influence on future trends. The parameters of the familiar would be extended to include those styles recent enough to still be wearable. Clothing which is actually new would tend to be more classic in style, a trend which is already evident, thereby extending its fashion life long enough to wear it out. Meanwhile, the need for variety would find expression in novel combinations, or the use of old styles in new contexts, or simply the exchange of unused garments for something "new" that someone else has grown tired of. The expanded parameters of acceptance would encourage experimentation in novel effects. This is what happened during the flower-child era when large groups of people consciously broke all the rules of dress. While the extremes are not likely to recur, the increased personalization of clothing choices might be a welcome result of resale growth. Moreover, increasing variety in resale options is likely to follow as acceptance and use become more pervasive.

Meanwhile, resale is here to stay. There is no time like the present to seek out the finds and take home the bargains. Those looking for classics to wear until they fall apart, those looking for something outrageous to wear to a party, and those just looking for something serviceable for right now, can find it in resale. The choices are there. The fun is in the looking, as well as the finds.



Happy hunting!

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