

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white towel, stands with her back to the camera in a wooden closet. Her hands are on the closet doors. The closet is filled with clothes hanging on hangers.

What's In Your Closet?

10 Elegant Essentials to Complete your Wardrobe

by

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Whether it's the "dynasty" shoulder pad era, the never-ending confusion of business casual, or the low-rise pant controversy, Ginger has helped women navigate through (sometimes completely ignoring!) the styles of the season and feel good about how they look. Your image is about representing the best of *you* (not making designers happy). Use these tips to get started (you'll find more at <http://www.totalimageconsultants.com/subscribe.shtml>).



In 1987, Ginger launched her own company, Total Image Consultants, with the simple credo that a dynamic personal and professional image could be created without having to relinquish personal style or comfort. Today, Ginger offers private consultations and remarkable makeovers for women, brides-to-be and transgender clients. Ginger also directs corporate seminars and community education programs for some of Boston's most prestigious organizations including Harvard Law School and Fidelity Investments.

A notable speaker and leader in the field of fashion and style, Ginger's adroit understanding of beauty trends and fashion image has been celebrated by The Boston Globe, Women's Health Magazine, cnn.com, ABCNews.com, Elegant Wedding Magazine, Fox TV News and WHDH Television's Chronicle. She also recently launched her new body image, self-esteem, and style home study program called "Who Taught You How to Dress?"

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Time and time again, I am asked to name the 5 or 10 things that every woman should have in her wardrobe. While I am not fond of generalizing, and I certainly do not believe in most “shoulds,” I find that having these 10 items in your wardrobe makes your life easier—or at least getting dressed for any occasion more joyful. Remember, these are general guidelines and personalizing them is what makes them perfect for you!

1. **Black Jeans** – These days, like it or not, jeans go almost everywhere. The ubiquitous blue jean is the traditional staple in most people’s casual wardrobe. And, while blue jeans can have a trendy, upbeat look, they are still jeans and the simple fact that they are blue renders them more casual than, say, black! If you do not already own a pair of black jeans, run to your nearest favorite store and pick up a pair. You’ll enjoy the comfort of wearing jeans (especially if they have some stretch) with the added elegance of their being black. You can dress them up or down, and they really do go almost anywhere.
2. **Knee-high Boots** – If you choose the right pair, you’ll want to wear them everyday (in season, of course)...and you can (well, sort of...it’s not good for your feet to wear the same shoes everyday, so buy two pairs!). Get them in either black or very dark brown (whichever you look best in and wear more often), and they will go with pants and skirts alike. Knee-high boots eliminate the question of what socks to wear and if you are wearing them with a skirt, just pair them with black or brown tights, and you’ll create a nice clean line. (If you are super trendy you can wear wild patterned or color tights and really make a statement!) One word of advice: no matter what height the heel, make sure they fit snugly to your calf and do not gap at the top. This way they will create a beautiful, sleek look.
3. **Scoop Neck Top** – How many times have I done a wardrobe consultation with someone who says “I have this great jacket, and I cannot find anything to wear under it?” More times than I can count, that’s for sure. The remedy: when in doubt have one or more scoop neck tops (your preference in sleeve length) that fit smoothly (but

not overly tightly) to the body. Get it in your favorite neutral colors (generally, black, dark brown, white, cream, camel or navy – it all depends on your coloring). A scoop neck top (with the scoop ending somewhere around or just below your breastbone) is more versatile than a v-neck top or a jewel neck top and less fussy than a button down shirt, and it allows room for beautiful jewelry or a scarf.

4. **LBD (Little Black Dress) or the Equivalent** – While it seems to be an unspoken rule, there is really nothing that says a LBD has to be black. If black is not your best color, why not get one in a great deep color—perhaps an elegant dark brown or copper, or a beautiful navy. Maybe even a rich plum or magnificent teal. To make it the most versatile, a bright, screaming color is probably not the best choice. Choose a dress that has simple detailing, a flattering neckline for you, hits about knee-length or just below, and has sleeves or not, depending on your personal preference. An understated LBD can go anywhere from a cocktail party to a wedding or a business dinner or (if need be) a funeral.
5. **Beautiful Handbag** – Accessories, especially a handbag or shoes, can make or break an outfit. If you are someone who loves handbags and changes yours regularly, then I am preaching to the choir. If you are someone who uses the same handbag everyday, every season, then it might be a good idea to get it out now and take a good hard look at it. Is it still in good repair? It is easy to overlook the need for a little TLC when it is a daily staple. A great, basic handbag is generally best in black or dark brown, with simple detailing that makes a statement without overpowering you. Do not settle for something you do not love to look at (remember, you use it everyday!), and this is one place that spending a few extra dollars (if necessary) to get exactly what you want can be well worth it.
6. **Evening Handbag** – While we are on the topic of handbags, if you have ever gotten dressed up to go out in the evening and realized the only bag you have is your everyday, a little-worse-for-wear handbag, then you know what I mean by making this a wardrobe essential. It does not have to be expensive, just pretty and versatile. It can have a little glitz if you want, or it can be a simple, elegant, timeless clutch. Your call—just be sure you have one at the ready for when the occasion presents itself!
7. **Pantsuit** – Having a pantsuit in your wardrobe means you are ready for just about anything. For those of you wrinkling up your nose, it is good to know that the pantsuit does not have to be what it always has been--a classic blazer and matching pants. While it should be in your best neutral, you can have some fun with the jacket

depending on your personal and professional needs. These days, the fabric choices are almost limitless (many even have a bit of stretch to make them super comfortable). It doesn't have to feel stiff and corporate-y, it can be of a fabric that allows easy movement and a softness that transitions easily into business casual. The detailing is up to you. Go traditional, trendy or somewhere in between, your choice. And, obviously, one of the most versatile aspects is that you can split up the pieces when the need arises. Imagine the jacket with that great pair of black jeans you are going to get!

8. **Well-Fitting Bra** – It is no secret that most women are not wearing a bra that fits them properly or offers adequate support and coverage. It's true. If you are not sure if you fall into this illustrious category, why not go for a fitting and find out. You would be surprised what a well-fitting bra can do for the fit of your clothes! Your bra should lie flat against your skin, no overflow or gapping anywhere, and the center should lie flat against your breastbone. Of course, choosing a bra that is also pretty (and with matching panties) is not necessary but you deserve it (even if only you will see them).
9. **Signature Jewelry or Scarf** – So many women contact me and say that they are out-of-their-minds bored with their wardrobe and do not know how to add a little extra life to what they wear. While color, fit, style choices, etc. can affect this boredom factor, one of the biggest culprits is the lack of any interesting accessories. While fine jewelry is lovely and has its place, it does not always have the substance to take a business casual outfit from ho-hum to wow! And, even if it can, most people cannot afford an arsenal of fine jewelry. Well-chosen costume or bridge jewelry can do that with ease. If this is new to you, experiment a bit and, a word of advice: wear the outfit you want to accessorize to the store. It will make the process much easier, efficient and fun! The first piece you purchase might be one that reflects your personality and goes with many different outfits (so silver or gold is often the most versatile).
10. **Beautiful Coat** – Have you ever left the house and had run to the car to stay warm because you do not have the right coat for your outfit (and you refuse to wear something dreadful)? Or, have you, in an effort to stay warm, worn a coat that you usually only walk the dog in because it's all you have, and you just hope you can take it off when you get where you're going before anyone sees it? Most of us have experienced one of these scenarios at some point in our life, and it's no fun! Owning a beautiful, classic trench coat (single breasted is most versatile and flattering) and a

simple, lovely knee-length winter coat will make your life so much easier...and warmer.

Honorable Mention: Okay, we've talked about the basics. Once you have the foundation pieces covered, it's time to have fun! Now you can add a luxury item (when I say luxury I mean something that makes your heart sing but which you often pass by because it's not a necessary piece and feels indulgent or frivolous). Remember, if it's something that you absolutely love and enjoy wearing it will become an essential part of your wardrobe. It does not have to be outrageously expensive or ostentatious. It just has to be something that makes you smile. Perhaps it's a gorgeous red handbag, or a necklace that makes a bolder statement than most of your accessories. Or, it could be something a little trendier than you normally wear (but the color, fit, and style are so you!) or an evening outfit that you don't even know where you are going to wear it yet but it's so beautiful you hate to pass it by (don't worry, the event will appear!). Whatever it is, you must love it and feel very excited about using it and adding it to your 10 essentials.

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<http://www.totalimageconsultants.com/events.shtml>

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