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Seasonal changes

Transition your summer wardrobe into the fall

By KATE KENNEDY, QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: September 19, 2010 12:00am



As the cooler weather sets in, so does the sorry tradition of packing up well-loved summer duds. The light and airy outfits that helped you breeze through hectic mornings at work and lounge during hazy afternoons at the cottage just don't seem appropriate anymore. And what could be more demoralizing than storing end-of-summer sale purchases before they've even been worn?

The strict practice of assigning clothes to a season could be a big mistake. In fact, you could be seriously decreasing the outfit possibilities of your wardrobe, says Fabiana Etcovich, personal stylist and owner of StylePro (stylepro.ca), an image consulting company in Montreal.

"The fashion industry wants you to buy ready-made clothes [for fall], but you can use creativity with the clothes you already have," she says.

Not only will your outfits multiply, the method will help you develop your style. "You can practice a sense of self in terms of your growth in fashion," says Etcovich.

The key to transitioning summer clothes into fall is mixing and matching different textures, prints and styles. For example, a navy sheath dress may not work with a

floral scarf and sandals anymore, but underneath a leather jacket or blazer, it could act as the perfect starting off point for a funky autumn look. Here are more tips from the pros on how to make the most of your warm weather wardrobe:

Dress with care

"You can wear basically all of your summer dresses," says Etcovich. Layer floaty, feminine dresses over dark skinny jeans or jeggings and pair more structured dresses with opaque tights, preferably in dark grey, navy and berry colours. Summery frocks should be worn with trendy thick-heeled shoes or shoe booties to add weight to the look. Mix and match feminine and masculine looks, like wearing a cozy cardigan and skinny belt with a tailored dress, or a sharkskin blazer will flouncy florals.

Layer lesson

The clue to good layering is knowing when to layer over a summer piece, and when to layer underneath it - and using the right colours while you're at it.

"Say that you've got a matte jersey or silk dress with a dark floral print, you can use the colour from the background and cull it out in the form of a textured turtleneck, and maybe a sweater in a sumptuous knit," says Tamara Glick, owner and image consultant with Trademark Image Consulting (www.trademarkimage.ca) in Toronto.

Layering underneath works, too, says Glick. So long as the neckline of the top or dress works with the neckline of the blouse, long T-shirt, or light sweater you plan to wear underneath. For example, a sleeveless boatneck dress may work with a 3/4-sleeve roundneck blouse, but a wider, halter-style neck should be worn underneath a layer, says Glick.

Short story

Thin cotton shorts should be avoided in the fall, but a pair of high-waisted, baggy shorts in a heavy blend can be worn with thick tights and a pair of heels to the office or out on the town. To balance a leggy look, try wearing shorts with a loose-fit silk blouse or a turtleneck in a fine knit with a skinny belt, says Etcovich. For daring fashionistas who purchased a romper this summer, a laced-up boot will give it an urban warrior vibe.

Tank talk

Racerback tank tops were big this spring and summer, and they're popping up in many fall collections in heavy cotton, cashmere and wool blends. The tank is especially flattering for women looking to show-off becoming shoulders they toned over the warmer months. Instead of buying new sleeveless tops, try wearing summer ones over a slim-fit sweater with a belt, says Etcovich. Use tanks to accent an outfit almost as if it were an accessory.

"Right now we're in a moment that's frivolous," says Etcovich.

Cargo pants

"The skinny cargo is very in, and it can definitely be worn in the next few months," says Etcovich. "It's going to be one of the key pieces this season - even more than jeans." The military-style pant, which is usually associated with surf and sand, can be matched with luxurious tops to add sophistication, while a silk blouse will add femininity to loose-fit cargo pants. Men can wear cargos in the fall, too, especially with a light knit sweater or layered tees. The key is to think "military chic" and stay away from a beachy look.

Shoe

Flip-flops are a definite fall faux pas and ballerina flats (especially in light hues) may look a little too springlike as leaves are falling. Leather gladiator sandals or deconstructed boots (the kind with cutouts) will work with slacks, while a pair of heels with thick straps can definitely add sex appeal when worn over dark tights.

Accessorize for autumn

Chunky necklaces, bracelets and rings can also add weight to a light top or dress while an antique-style pendant will instantly add depth to an outfit. Scarves with a texture somewhere between tissue-thin and thick-enough-to-wear-in-January also help bring hot weather fashions forward. The classic fedora or this year's must-have topper, a slouchy, collapsed hat, can make even the frilliest of silk summer blouses look ready for fall.

Men

For the office, blazers in rich textures like corduroy, moleskin or flannel will make a summery collared shirt look positively dapper. Patterned tees over white long-sleeve tops looks a little stale and men would do better to wear bright tees under a muted boyfriend sweaters. **Glick says men can wear khakis year-round, so long as they don't opt for a light stone colour in the dead of winter.**

WHAT NOT TO WEAR:

For the most part, what you can get away with wearing in the fall depends on your styling expertise. That said, Kelly green and turquoise are big "no-no's" for everyone. Those keen on bold colours should go for electric blue, yellow or raspberry instead.

Beginners should focus on re-vamping summer clothes made of sturdier, tightly-woven fabrics, like cotton blended with wool or silk, rather than those made of loose weaves (think linen and thin cotton).

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