

THE WORKING FAMILY : MANAGING AT HOME



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Clothing Decisions: Sharpen Your Buying Skills

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Are you a **CIA** member?
No, not the **CIA** in Wash-
ington – the **CIA** at home!
Are you a **Clothing Inspec-
tion Agent**, that is!!
Don't you sometimes serve
as an Agent to inspect the
cleanliness, appropriate-
ness, fit, availability,
and quality of clothing
for yourself and the fam-
ily? Have you ever taken
time to evaluate or improve
your skill as a **Clothing
Inspection Agent**? This
lesson is designed to help
you learn how to make a
good investment of your
clothing dollar.

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SHARPEN YOUR PLANNING SKILLS

Clothing is an important part of the family's money and time management program. While the clothing portion of the budget is more flexible than food and shelter, the family's clothing needs cannot be an ignored segment of family decision making. The less time and money a family or individual has to spend on clothing, the more skill is needed to plan and shop wisely.

Today's marketplace is no place to be on your own. Let's face it, when you go shopping — whether it's for clothing, food, or health care — you need a whole lot more than money. Be informed, ask questions, compare, and plan so that pressure of time or a lack of funds will not play too heavily on the decision to be made.

Since you studied the lessons, **MANAGEMENT: TO REACH GOALS** and **TIME MANAGEMENT: WORK SMARTER — NOT HARDER**, you have gotten adequate information and guidelines for planning the time needed to manage a wardrobe as well as the basic tools needed for making clothing purchase decisions.

SHARPEN YOUR BUYING SKILLS

How do you make a good investment of your clothing dollar?

This lesson is designed to help you sharpen your buying skills in clothing. If you invest well, you get a good return in the form of many satisfied wearings and an attractive appearance.

ANALYZE FAMILY CLOTHING NEEDS

- for all family members
- on a seasonal or yearly basis

Frequently the actual purchase and management of a family wardrobe is considered to be the task of the females in the family. However, before shopping for clothing items, it should be a task of the entire family to have a clear picture of family wardrobe needs.



Families who plan and seek ways to manage their clothing will be more apt to build an appropriate and satisfying wardrobe within the family income.

It makes good sense to do wardrobe planning on a seasonal or yearly basis.



Begin by taking a try-on inventory of the clothes you have, for, in most cases, a "new" wardrobe is built upon an existing one. What wearable items does yours include? Garments that haven't been worn for a year aren't likely to be missed. Each family member ought to do this - Ask yourself why you haven't been wearing some items and let your answers guide you in making future clothing purchase decisions.



After a family discussion of wardrobe needs, list the clothing items that will probably be purchased sometime within the next month or season.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

KNOW HOW TO BUY

- the best you can afford, following your shopping plan
- so you won't get caught in the "fad trap"
- based on quality of fabric and workmanship

A few good clothes, well chosen and the best you can afford to buy, will be worn often, look good for the life of the garment, and give you a good return for your money and planning time.

Avoid the Fad Trap!

To be an effective shopper, you should be familiar with the terms

fashion and *fad*, and be able to recognize apparel that falls into each of these groups.



Fashion consists of the prevailing styles or designs at any given time (for example, jackets with narrow lapels, A-line skirts, ruffles). New styles are introduced constantly, and when a style is widely accepted and followed it becomes a current fashion. A fashion usually lasts for at least three years, then it may be replaced by a new one.

A fad is a short-lived fashion which lasts only a few months. Interest quickly fades when it is no longer "fun."

The length of time you expect to wear a garment is an important factor in deciding how much to spend on it. Most people prefer to invest money in clothing that will be fashionable for several years rather than in faddish items that will soon be outdated. Knowing style trends can help you buy a garment when it is coming into a fashion cycle rather than going out.



Think about garment styles that you like this season. List those that you think are fads.

Marks of Quality

The quality that you will need in a particular garment is determined by how many times it will be worn, the occasions for which it will be worn, and how durable the garment must be to take the wear it will get.

For items that you expect to wear as often and as long as possible, you need to buy the best quality available at the price you can afford. Some specific characteristics which mark quality in apparel are the design of the garment and the fabric used.

A garment should be chosen with regard to its style, fit, and design elements — lines, color, texture — that are becoming to the person who will wear it.

Shoppers are both delighted and confused by the seemingly infinite variety of clothing fabrics available today. Fabric quality is evaluated in terms of what the wearer can expect from it. Check to see if it is woven or knitted without flaws. The kind of finish (durable press, shrinkage controlled) may also influence the performance of the fabric and how it is to be cared for.

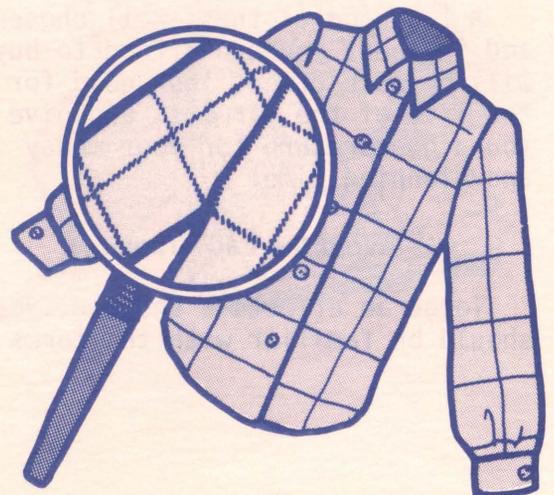
The fabric should be compatible to the design lines of the garment (such as a crisp, firm fabric for garments with pressed-in creases). It should be durable enough for the use to be given it (firmly woven or knitted fabric for underwear, for example). The fabric should be comfortable for the weather in which it is to be worn, and should be easy to care for. All of these qualities, plus many more, are yours for the buying.

CHOOSE CLOTHING THAT WILL LAST

There's as much variation in the quality of clothing as there is in price. And a high price does not necessarily mean high quality! Carefulness in making clothes includes the way the garment is cut, how seams and darts are sewn, and accurate construction of pockets, buttonholes, collars, sleeves and hems. Learn to recognize good workmanship. The guidelines are similar whether you are shopping for men's or women's clothes, for teens or young children.

Clothing Inspection

You can judge quality by checking out the following general points of good workmanship:



- * Cut and fabric allowance. Garment pieces should be cut with the grain, with generous fabric allowances for design details such as hems, seams, pleats, lapels, and fitting and fashion ease. Design in fabrics (stripes, plaids, checks) should be matched at all seams and located to enhance the style of the garment.
- * Seams should be even in width, flat, and wide enough to withstand strain and permit alteration. If needed, be sure that all woven fabric edges are finished to prevent raveling. Seams should be stitched with thread and size of stitches that are compatible to the fabric and location of the seam. Check outside seams and darts for puckering or fabric caught in stitches.
- * Reinforcements. There should be extra stitching, patches, bar tacks, metal rivets, or tape at points of strain -- underarm seams, openings, pleats or slits, pockets, and knees and elbows in children's play clothes.
- * Hems should be flat, even in width, invisible on right side, carefully finished on the inside, securely stitched and even in length. The width of a hem varies with the type of fabric and style of the garment. It should not look bulky.
- * Buttonholes should be smooth, cut on the grain, properly placed, and firmly stitched, with no loose threads or frayed edges. Corners should be reinforced.
- * Fasteners should be firmly attached, properly spaced, of a suitable size and type for garment, and there must be none missing. Extra buttons are sometimes provided.
- * Trimmings and decorations should enhance the garment, be well-placed and neatly and firmly attached. They should be able to withstand the same care as that recommended for the garment.
- * Zippers and other closures should be smooth and flat, securely attached and of a suitable color, weight, and type. Try the zipper to see if it slides smoothly and remains closed at the top when strain is applied. Openings should be long enough to allow easy entry into garment.
- * Lining should be smooth, properly inserted, of the appropriate weight and quality for the outer fabric, and should require the same kind of care. The fabric should be firm and resist raveling. A lining adds body, helps to retain a garment's shape, and adds to wearing comfort.
- * Pockets should be smooth, flat, well matched, and securely attached. Look for reinforced corners.
- * Collars and lapels. Their shape and style are controlled by an interfacing -- a third layer of fabric. The collar should be made so that the top turns slightly over the undercollar so as to hide the seam edges. Lapels should lie flat to the chest with a graceful roll and clean-cut edge. The "V" formed by the lapels should end in a soft roll at the top button.

Look for those construction details that are most important to you.



To get in some practice before you go shopping for clothing, try this. Go to your closet, select a garment and rate the workmanship of the garment features listed here.

Feature	Good	Poor
Seam allowance		
Pressing of seams/darts		
Machine stitching		
Hems		
Fabric quality		

The rating may tell you why you have or have not been pleased with the garment.

Learning the basic checkpoints of good clothing workmanship is an exercise in quality buying. Being well dressed does not require a lot of money or a lot of clothes, but it does require thoughtful planning, sharp buying skills, and knowledge put into practice.

Don't be shy. Make your inspection before you purchase the garment in the store, not after you get home. You may be saved from having to make a trip back to the store or from an unpleasant hassle with a store manager or clerk. The clerk will respect you more if you show that you know and recognize good quality.



HOME WORK

Now that you have studied this lesson and completed the suggested activities, please follow the directions given for the "Check Your Clothing Purchase Decisions" which are on the following page.

Name _____

Please return this
check sheet by _____

CHECK YOUR CLOTHING PURCHASE DECISIONS

Directions: Please complete and return to your Extension Agent. The next lesson will be sent to you.

1. a. Do you plan to make any changes in how you manage your wardrobe as a result of this lesson?

_____ Yes _____ No

- b. If so, list the changes you plan to make.

2. Of the garments listed that you shop for, check the one type which generally has the best workmanship.

underwear _____ women's dresses _____

skirts _____ men's shirts _____

blouses _____ children's play wear _____

3. As a *Clothing Inspection Agent*, check where you are most apt to judge the workmanship of the following garment features:

GARMENT FEATURES	INSPECTION		
	AT STORE	AT HOME	NONE MADE
Fabric quality			
Compatibility of design to wearer			
Cut and fabric allowance			
Seam width and finish			
Reinforced areas			
Hem finishes			
Location of buttonholes			
How fasteners are attached			
Length of openings			
Fit of lining			
Collar construction			

Please cut on this line

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