



Getting Real

Angie Mizzell

Need Fashion Tips?

Don't ask me – I used to own a skort

I need to keep my muffin top comfortably hidden inside my pants, and my jeans shouldn't rise to my rib cage. This much I know. But if you need someone to assist you on your shopping spree, I'm not your girl. You're better off taking my husband. He'll tell you what he thinks, and he's usually right.

Every so often, FedEx will drop a package from Ralph Lauren or Banana Republic at our doorstep – not for me, but for him. Yes, my husband shops online and can even rock an occasional bow tie, which is hard to do. I'm not sure where he gets it, but he has that “thing” – you know, an eye for what's in style and what looks good. Back in our dating days, he did me a huge favor and told me my jackets were too big, it was time to toss the Keds and the skort was out of style. (Although I hear the skort is making a comeback. My gut is telling me to resist.)

Being married to the fashion police has helped me determine what doesn't work. But I still have a hard time figuring out what does. That's one reason my closet is practically empty. My husband's clothes are creeping uncomfortably past the center line, and each day I stare. And stare. And huff and then shout, “I have nothing to wear!”

Months after having baby No. 2, I purged my transitional clothes. You know, clothes you wear when you're too pregnant for regular clothes but not pregnant enough for maternity clothes. And in one of my hormonal/sleep-deprived states, I gave away several things I now regret.



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Note to self: take a breather before sending five trash bags to Goodwill. There are some nice button-up shirts I would love to have back.

I need to update my wardrobe, but I'm not sure where to begin. When I told my friend Shauna Heathman, a Charleston-based image consultant, about the state of my closet, she felt my pain. “Shopping is such a manipulative process,” she says. “It takes a lot of effort to stay focused and

shop effectively for a closet you love.”

Shauna says I should develop a strategy before I shop. I never thought of that. It's like creating a grocery list for clothes. She has her clients fill out a pie chart showing how they spend their time: Work, leisure activities, etc. The types of clothes they own – and the quantity – should be in direct proportion to how much time they spend on each activity.

She told me to start with the basics – items that are versatile and easy to mix and match: A black pencil skirt, nice trousers, a pair of dark jeans and some neutral tops. She says accessories can be bought at a bargain and will give my wardrobe depth. She also advises: Set a budget, stick to it and don't rush. Never buy something on sale for which I wouldn't pay full price. And then ask myself, how well does this fit? Is this a good color for me? She suggests leaving the tags on the clothes until I wear them. And if I haven't worn the item in a month, consider returning it.

Shauna is speaking my husband's language. “Mr. Fashion” is also “Mr. Logistics” and “Mr. Game Plan.” So this time, I'm going to stare deep into my closet and take some notes. What do I really need? How much am I able to spend? What items can I buy now, and what can wait until next month?

With my notes in hand and husband by my side, my closet might be on the verge of a comeback. But if you see me at the mall eyeing a skort, you have permission to tackle me and scream, “No! Don't do it!” ✨

Angie Mizzell does most of her writing with her two small children swinging from her limbs. Her personal essays have been published in several print and online publications. Contact her at angiemizzell.com.

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