



Karen Anderson

The worst part of a nice night out: choosing an outfit from your closet

Ever wonder why your closet of clothes keeps expanding exponentially but you're still faced with a dearth of options when it comes time to pick out an outfit? Club columnist Karen Anderson offers some insights (and advice).

When I walk into my clothes closet to get ready for an evening out, the Scholarly Gentleman knows just what to do. He fixes himself a sandwich, turns on a movie, and, if he's smart, puts on a pair of headphones.

Deciding what to wear always takes me a while. And he'd rather not hear my shrieks of frustration.

Early in our relationship, he once made the mistake of asking, "What's going on in there?" That's when he discovered I'm a good shot with a pair of too-tight high heels.

The problem is this: No matter what I buy, I always end up with one sweater, one shirt, and one pair of pants that I love. But they're in the laundry; while the rest of my closet is full of clothing with ... problems.

"If you like that shirt, why not just order another one?" asks the Scholarly Gentleman (the man with 12 drawers stuffed with vintage rock-and-roll T-shirts).

He's got to be kidding. If I buy an item I like, the brand immediately discontinues it. If the company is particularly devious, they may also offer the same shirt the following season ... but we all know not to fall for that trick! If it's a shirt for men, it will be manufactured in an inferior fabric. If it's for women, the new version will be executed in an exquisitely hideous color named after a piece of produce: apricot, asparagus or mushroom. Of course, I'll order it anyway, try it on, and stand gaping in front of my mirror. It not only looks awful; it feels even worse, because of the label.

The most coveted award in the clothing industry these days is, apparently, Most Infuriating Label.

Categories for this competition include the Most Irritating Label Material, Most Irritating Label Location, Longest Label, Bulkiest Label, and Label Most Likely to Stick Out the Back of Your Collar.

There are also special categories for Label with the Smallest Print and Label with the Most Obscure Fabric Care Icon (I have a jacket with an icon that seems to warn you not to dry it on a chessboard after washing it in a salad spinner). And, let us not forget the People's Choice Award for the label that is Most Difficult to Remove.

As the back-to-work and back-to-school shopping season approaches, I'd like to volunteer three pieces of hard-won clothing advice:

1. Never confuse fashion with clothing. Fashion is what celebrities (and teenagers) buy. Clothing is what the rest of us wear.
2. Beware of storing clothing for more than 11 months. Something happens in storage. The item will emerge (1) tighter, (2) shorter, (3) baggier, or (4) an astonishingly unflattering color. Extremely expensive articles of designer clothing that have been stored often manage to achieve all four transformations.
3. Always buy clothes that coordinate ... with your pets' fur. You will save hundreds of dollars on lint rollers.
4. Don't fall in love with a T-shirt. T-shirts shrink. The more you love the T-shirt, the more it shrinks. For some reason known only to manufacturers, men's T-shirts shrink vertically while women's T-shirts shrink horizontally. This drives women nuts. Men don't

seem to mind.

"How do I look?" I ask the Scholarly Gentleman when I finally emerge from my closet. I'm clothed neck to ankle in black garments, and picking cat hair from my sweater.

"Lovely, as always," he says.

He picks up his car keys. I grab my purse. Against my better judgment, I turn my attention to his outfit. He's wearing his usual pants, with his beloved Fillmore West Grateful Dead T-shirt, circa 1969. I close my eyes, put both hands over my mouth, and consider the upside: those shirts sell for \$500 on eBay.

