

Step 1 – Discover Their Style

Background

Helping, guiding and advising your client is a bit like putting together all the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. To be an effective Personal Shopper and Wardrobe Organiser you need to be able to appreciate and understand all these pieces so that you can create a wardrobe that works for them. We will be looking at colours, body shapes, accessories, make-up and grooming in future chapters but for this first Style Step you will be learning about what might be happening inside your client’s head rather than looking at their body.

You might not utilise all of the information in this Style Step with many of your clients; but the background knowledge and the suggested questions to ask will help you to build rapport quickly and have a greater understanding of what she wants to achieve.

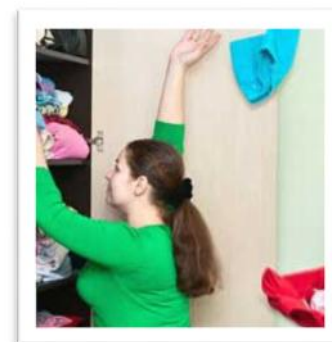
You could also use some of the questions in your “introductory questionnaire” – this is the document that you would send to your client before you meet her for the first time – this contains a number of questions to help you understand her current wardrobe and shopping habits – but more about that later.



What is their wardrobe like now?

Before you start giving any specific clothing advice you may want to find out more about their current “relationship” with clothes. Knowledge is power. Having feedback to this type of question will help you achieve your long term goals becoming a Personal Shopper.

In this first Style Step you will be discovering their personal style so that whatever they buy in the future really reflects their personality and preferences.



First Impressions

Human Beings believe what we see – this goes back to the fight or flight instinct – we quickly make decisions about people based on how they look and how they present themselves. We therefore literally have a matter of seconds to make a good 1st impression – so let’s make sure that impression is what we want!

How do we learn about clothes?



The reason most of us end up with the wardrobe we have is due to a combination of different factors and influences.

What were our clothing experiences as a child or teenager?

Because it all starts with our parents and siblings – if we were brought up in a house full of boys &/or had a Mother with no time or inclination towards fashion or clothes it would have been much harder for us to find out about style as we wouldn’t have had any role models - Although we may have had a stylish Aunt or a fashionable friend to guide us.

To add to the confusion in our wardrobes **we then introduce the influence of magazines and shops** - all offering tempting new clothes but if you aren’t sure what works or you just copy your friend who looks completely different to you, it is no wonder that we end up in a muddle! It really is a miracle that so many of us ever manage to get dressed in the morning and look vaguely presentable!

We are going to look at how to dress your client’s body in detail over the coming weeks but for this Style Step we are going to focus on how they want to be seen in the world and how their clothes can help them with this.

Choosing clothes should be fun and wearing the right clothes can be life changing. We can express ourselves and our personalities through our clothes and they are a very easy way to build rapport quickly.



Giving and receiving compliments – create a new habit.

As you work with your clients, they will have the confidence to start making changes to their wardrobe – they are going to begin to receive more compliments! **It is really important that they are ready to accept these compliments with grace.**

All they need to say is “thank you” – it is all too easy to make some excuse like, “Oh this old thing” or “Really?” ... and once they are receiving compliments, **teach them to pay it forward so that when they see a great outfit or a fabulous colour on someone tell them, because it will that person feel amazing as well.**

Discover Their Style – The Exercises

There are a number of exercises that you can complete with your client and questions that you can ask to really get to know her better. A few of the most effective exercises to help you to identify her unique style are listed below.



After completing all or some of these you will have a number of words &/or phrases that could be used to sum up her style. These words are going to be vitally important as they will help you to determine which clothes to select for her.

You will need to print out the Worksheet and the Style Personality Quiz for this section.

Their Mood Board

This is their chance to get creative!

Flick through some magazines and brochures and rip out any pictures that appeal.

It doesn't mean that she wants to look like the model in the picture or wear the dress, but that there is something about the image that she connects with or likes. It doesn't necessarily even have to be a picture of a garment. It could be the scenery, the floaty fabric, the shiny buttons, the soft textures, the smart suit, the make-up, the hairstyles, accessories or the great colours. It's a matter of them listening to their gut and rip out anything that strikes a chord!

Once they have collected these pictures they then need to sort through them to see if there are any they want to discard and then they can trim the photos and stick them onto an A4 or A3 piece of card. This board is then their inspiration and will act as a reminder of looks, styles and fabrics that they love for you both! Ask them what it is about these clothes and images that they like and list the words that they use.

Even if your client doesn't have the time to complete this exercise, ask them to bring a couple of images taken from magazines to their first consultation so that you have an idea of what they like and you can start to discover their style words.

Their Favourite "Things"

Ask them to select a couple of items from their home or wardrobe that they absolutely love. This could be a household item like a vase, a picture, or a piece of furniture or it could be an accessory like a necklace, bracelet, handbag, or pair of shoes (try not to include garments at this stage)

Then for each item ask them to list what it is about these items that they love. It could be the shape, the colour, the design, the practicality or just how it makes them feel when they see it or use it.

Their Style Icons



Ask them to think of the people that they most admire – these could be celebrities, business people, politicians, friends, family or colleagues. They could be famous or someone they know, they could be living or dead – ask them to write down the reasons why they admires them – it could be their character, their strengths &/or their style.

Examples:

Grace Kelly – elegance & refinement

Madonna – funky & different

Their Style Words

You have been collecting words from the previous exercises - there are **two final important questions to ask:**

1. How do you want to be perceived by others?
2. What would you like someone to believe about you when they first meet you and before you even open your mouth?

Ask them to write down any words that come to mind - the words that they say might be different for different areas of their life.

Examples might include:

Approachable
Strong
Powerful
Fun
Sexy

Professional
Dynamic
Assertive
Knowledgeable
Creative

We can then use these words to help create outfits and be selective in what items are buy in a Personal Shop or Wardrobe Workout.

Think about how these words might look as garments or outfits? How might these words effect a person's general grooming?

Example:

I had a client who works as a coach and she wanted to look "creative", "approachable" and "professional". As we were sorting through her wardrobe it became apparent that all her black and neutral clothes needed some interesting accessories plus the old, dated suits and scuffed shoes that she had been wearing were not going to work!

Knowing these words really helps you and your client get focussed.



Their Style Personality



This can be seen as another way to classify someone's personal style and helps to explain why two women with apparently the same colouring, body shape, size and height might choose completely different clothes and accessories.

Our personal style is one way that we can communicate with the outside world before we open our mouths. We help clients to use their clothes to express who they are or want to be.

It isn't about dressing to please others - as this will never feel right to your client or look congruent to the rest of us.

When we find our style we feel authentic, comfortable and happy as it suits our personality and lifestyle.

Knowing all this information about your client means that you can reject garments that don't fit with their personality or style words and ensure that they always look consistent and congruent because they are wearing what works for them rather than their friends or colleagues.

Differentiating a client's style preference can be extremely powerful, especially when combined with her style words - it is a technique used by many Image Consultants and Personal Stylists.

There are four main style personality types

Natural
Classic
Dramatic
Creative

Most women will fall predominantly into one of these categories but may have to adapt their style to suit the different areas of their lives.

Clothing personality shouldn't supersede the body shape advice that you will give your client but it might help her appreciate why she wasn't comfortable in some styles of clothes and guide her when she is shopping.

On the next page is an example of the Style Personality Quiz you could give to your client.



STYLE PERSONALITIES

Circle any words that apply to you and then total each column.

YOUR IMAGE

Casual	Striking	Elegant	Feminine
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COLOUR CHOICE

Low contrast	High contrast	Understated	Pastels
Easy	Bright	Neutrals	Soft

FABRICS

Cottons	Leather	Silk	Crepe
Jersey	Satin	Cashmere	Chiffon

PATTERNS

Prints	Geometric	Plain	Floral
Stripes	Abstract	Subdued	Dots

JEWELLERY

Beads	Sparkling	Pearls	Unusual
Metal	Large	Discreet	Fine

SHOES

Comfortable	Fashionable	Court	Heeled
Low Heels	Distinctive	Plain	Open

HAIR

Easy care	Groomed	Controlled	With movement
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MAKE-UP

Minimal	Stunning	Complementary	Pretty
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NATURAL

DRAMATIC

CLASSIC

CREATIVE

STUDY IN STYLE

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Here are some tips for the different Style Personalities

Classic: For example Kate Middleton.

- You probably prefer timeless, practical, simple, tailored, traditional styles.
- You like to be well groomed with simple make-up and accessories which aren't too dramatic.
- You will like neutral colours and natural fibres.
- You will look for investment pieces rather than the latest fashion.
- *A word of caution;* you have got to be careful that you don't look dated, safe or boring.

Natural: For example Jennifer Anniston.

- You probably prefer casual, comfortable, relaxed, athletic, practical, informal styles.
- You will like functional clothes and accessories and minimal make-up.
- You will probably like natural fibres with some stretch and texture.
- *A word of caution;* you have got to be careful that you don't come across as a 'lazy dresser'.

Dramatic: For example Victoria Beckham.

- You probably prefer statement, high fashion, striking, distinctive and attention grabbing styles.
- You like bold, structured designs, often going for style over comfort and lots of make-up.
- You will like strong colours, dramatic prints and crisper fabrics.
- *A word of caution;* because you want to be noticed you may alienate yourself by seeming unapproachable or superior.

Creative: For example Sarah Jessica Parker.

- You probably prefer soft, feminine, floaty, unstructured, intricate and delicate styles.
- You like lots of details, a variety of colours and quite a natural make-up.
- You will like sheer fabrics, soft textures and subtle patterns.
- You will also look for unusual accessories.
- *A word of caution;* be careful as you may come across as immature or unable to cope with difficult tasks.





There is a copy of the **Style Personality Quiz** in the vault for you to use to help you pinpoint your client's style preference.

Even if you don't use any of these techniques hopefully this chapter will have given you an idea of some of the questions you could be asking your client so that you can really understand the clothes that she likes and how she wants to be perceived by others.

Having created their style words and knowing their style personality, is there anything in their current wardrobe that represents these words that they could be wearing right now, so that they immediately start to express themselves in the way that feels right to them?

And finally ... a few ... RULES ...

As we work through all the different elements of the training course please keep the following “rules” in mind so that you can share them with your clients.

1. **ONLY buy and wear clothes and accessories that you LOVE, make you feel GREAT and reflect your STYLE.**
2. **Dress for the body you are NOW – not the one you were 10 years ago or the one you'd like to be.**
3. **Size is just a number – go for FIT everytime – don't focus on the number.**
4. **Expect to make alterations to get the right fit or be willing to spend time to find “the perfect garment”.**
5. **You don't have to buy everything in the sales – you're worth full price!**
6. **Don't save clothes for BEST – wear them now!**
7. **Know your STYLE WORDS.**