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## Woman/Style

# Take a shopping trip in your closet

By Judy Marcus | SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE  
February 20, 2008

Shopping in your closet is about mixing and matching, making the most of your wardrobe. It's also about reinventing your clothing and accessories, donning them in imaginative ways -- wearing a mini-dress as a tunic, a necklace as a belt, a button-down blouse as a jacket.

The concept of going shopping in your closet has another advantage besides saving money.

"It allows you to personalize your look, to really create your own unique style," says Kathryn Finney, author of "How to Be a Budget Fashionista" and founder of TheBudgetFashionista.com.

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So, ladies, are you ready to roll? To help you jump-start your closet shopping spree, here are some tips from four fashion experts.

Kristi Kelley, wardrobe director, and Robin Baab, creative director, The Image Studios, 22 N. Morgan St., 312-421-4660, [theimagestudios.com](http://theimagestudios.com). 1. Wear a long sweater as a dress over tights.

2. Dig out your accessories and play with them in new ways. For example, metallics are hot; try layering your chain necklaces in the same metal hues. Or jazz up a tired winter coat with various belt options. Try a wide belt (2-3 inches) in leather or patent leather.

3. Wear one neutral color such as black, brown, beige or gray from head to toe. Monochrome is a classic look that's also slimming.

4. Have an old fur coat refitted to a more current style or have the coat made into unique wearables such as hobo bags and vests.

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Best hey-I-never-thought-of- that

idea: Do you have a strand of pearls or beads that's too long? Buy a necklace shortener. (Available at Bourdage Pearls, 3530 N. Southport Ave., or online at [jewelrybyrhonda.com](http://jewelrybyrhonda.com). The most popular shorteners are priced from \$11 to \$16.)

Nina Garcia, author of "The Little Black Book of Style" (Collins, 2007, \$17.95), fashion director at "Elle" magazine and judge on Bravo's "Project Runway." 1. When mining your closet, don't try to duplicate too many trends at the same time. One or two is fine.

2. Find a great tailor. With the right alterations, an inexpensive piece of clothing can look posh, and an oldie-but-goodie -- such as a 1980s-style blazer -- can be revamped to look chic and modern.

3. When mixing and matching, remember: "Anything that sounds like it won't make sense usually looks amazing," Garcia writes in her book. Try on the H&M with the

Prada, the casual with the elegant, the vintage with the modern.

4. Raid your loved ones' closets (with their permission, of course). Your mom's for vintage jewelry, long gloves, frame handbags and fur stoles. Your husband's or boyfriend's for a classic man's watch. Your dad's for fedoras and panama hats.

Best hey-I-never-thought-of-that idea: Makeup bags can often be used as lovely little clutches.

Robin Walker, image and wardrobe consultant, My Wardrobe Companion, 1160 S. [Michigan](#) Ave., No.3002, 312-431-9662, mywardrobecompanion.com. 1. Organize your closet: jackets with jackets, pants with pants, etc. Break up suits too. Being able to see what you have is key to discovering new fashion possibilities.

2. A scarf can be a style-conscious woman's new best friend. For added drama, don a scarf as a pocket square, a belt or a headband. Wrap it around your neck, ponytail, wrist, purse strap or even a suitcase handle to identify your luggage.

3. Refresh a blouse or a jacket by replacing the buttons. For a luxe look put leather buttons on a tweed blazer.

Best hey-I-never-thought-of- that idea: Have your long-sleeve blouses altered to three-quarter sleeves. The length is not only more flattering on most women, says Walker, but it can be worn year-round.

Kathryn Finney, author of "How To Be a Budget Fashionista: The Ultimate Guide to Looking Fabulous for Less" (Ballantine Books, 2006, \$12.95).

1. Wrap a pashmina scarf around your body like a makeshift poncho, pinning it high on your shoulder with a brooch.

2. Modernize a coat by changing the lining. Finney updated a black tweed winter coat by replacing the lining with a rich purple color.

3. Try wearing a trench coat (without the lining) as a dress; it may have to be altered to make it more form-fitting in the waist.

4. "Repurpose your boots," says Finney. Have a shoemaker you trust cut down a pair of knee-high boots to a more current style. Be sure to bring pictures of the type of boot you have in mind.

Best hey-I-never-thought-of- that idea: Think outside the ear. Wear vintage posts or clip-on earring as lapel pins. Clip-on earrings can also work as shoe "jewelry." Try them on black flats. With a little do-it-yourself effort, a lone earring can also be turned into a pendant, ring or barrette (check out Michaels for supplies).

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#### BONUS POINTS

1. Wear something because you love it, not just because it's a trend.

2. Before you start to shop in your closet, clean it out. Weed out anything that isn't flattering, doesn't fit or is worn, torn or otherwise damaged. And when you try on garments, do it in front of a full-length mirror.

3. Some trends you may be able to unearth from your existing wardrobe include patent leather, metallics, cameos, feathers, Mary Jane shoes and any shade of gray (but the darker the better) as well as jewel tones.