

Making Ripples

Minimalist Wardrobe Tips

by Amanda Bancroft

Suffocating under all that stuff? Often our wardrobes are the simplest way to downsize and make a difference for our budget, mental health, charities, and the environment. Reducing what we buy helps reduce unnecessary textile waste thrown into landfills. The minimalist wardrobe is self-directed and designed based on your lifestyle, so it may help reduce the quantity of things you own while actually improving quality of life.

First, decide your unique wardrobe needs. Do you need mostly professional attire, or casual, sweat-friendly clothes? This is based entirely on subjective opinion and nobody can tell you how many shoes or t-shirts you should own. Consider your job, hobbies, family and lifestyle, and write down what quantity of each item you think you really need to get from one laundry day to the next.

Then get rid of items you never wear and don't want. Think about how each item makes you feel while wearing it: does it remind you of happy memories or terrible experiences? Does it make you feel healthy and comfortable? Maybe you're really comfortable in something that isn't very practical, or vice versa. Or maybe you want your wardrobe to more closely match your values, such as supporting fair trade and organic manufacturing processes. Donating to charities also feels good and gives a dopamine hit to the brain.

Tough to decide? Throw everything you don't wear much into a storage box for months or a year; if you don't think about it, get rid of it. If you end up needing it, take it out of the box – you know it's a keeper. This also gives you more closet space in the meantime. Reduced clutter helps some people have more focus and peace of mind.

For others, the budget is what's most important. To save money, curb shopping sprees by keeping fewer items that do more for you by multitasking. Pants that turn into shorts are like two clothing items in one. Dresses with pockets could mean fewer purses. Coats that convert from winter to spring and fall by incorporating removable insulated layers with an exterior lightweight rain jacket can save you from buying and storing three or more coats.

Also, keep items that can be mixed and matched with other items rather than things you can only wear as a single outfit. Select just a few favorite colors or colors that go with everything. Wearing favorite colors or shades that we feel we look best in can boost self-esteem.

Finally, remember that a minimalist wardrobe is not all about having less. It's also about having better. Don't just get rid of stuff – buy the things you really need, and spend enough to get good

quality or sustainable items. Having just the right item is better than having multiple items that only do half the job needed or wanted.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Mt. Kessler. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.