

go shopping in your closet

Get a whole new wardrobe without buying a thing.

DO YOU HAVE a closetful of clothes and nothing to wear? Susan Sommers has a promise for you: She can create a brand-new wardrobe based on items that you already own. A former fashion stylist, author, and magazine editor, Sommers had been doing this for friends and family for years when she realized she could parlay the talent into a career. So a year ago, she started her own wardrobe-consulting company called DressZing. For \$195, she'll assemble five outfits from your current collection and tell you what to add if you want to go shopping.

Sommers, who lives in the New York area, will fly to other parts of the country—but it'll cost you. Or you can take her ideas into your closet and see what you discover.

"Some women have great pieces in their wardrobes but just don't know how to put them together," Sommers says. "Or they're tired of everything they own and need to see a fresh way to wear it."

My appointment began with Sommers asking me a series of questions: "How do you like to look?" (Pulled-together and neat.) "What are you most comfortable in?" (Classics such as jeans and button-downs.) "Is there anything you won't wear?" (Bright colors like fuchsia and anything uncomfortable.) "What occasions are we creating outfits for?" (Date nights with my husband, work events, and outings with my 2-year-old.) Then I held my breath and threw my closet door open.

Sommers started by teaming a beige suit jacket with my favorite faded blue jeans, a red cashmere hooded sweater, and a white T-shirt to go underneath. Voilà! An outfit I could wear to a friend's baby shower. Next, she combined a black V-necked sweater, beige suede pants, and a small silver bag my grandmother had given me. In seconds, I was ready



CREATIVE COMBOS: Personal stylist Susan Sommers (in black dress) pairs unusual colors and patterns for a new look. (Jacket and pants, Anthropologie, \$98 each; turtleneck, United Colors of Benetton, \$39.) Photos help clients replicate outfits later.



for a night out. Sommers surprised me most when she took a pale-gray V-necked sheath dress, tucked a white T-shirt underneath it, and topped it with a short-sleeved black cardigan, turning a boring piece into a smart outfit for a work function.

Within an hour, I had a whole new wardrobe—without trekking to the mall or spending an evening online. As she does with all her clients, she snapped digital pictures of each outfit and then e-mailed them to me. A week later, I perused the photos, slipped on one of my new ensembles, and headed out to dinner with friends. —M.B.

Sommers' rules of fashion

Want to see your clothes in a new light? Here's how.

Mix patterns and colors. "Certain designs, such as checks and pinstripes, work well together," Sommers says.

Try flipping through a magazine and tearing out combinations you like; then replicate them.

Combine rich and poor.

Pair a good-quality piece (a cashmere sweater, maybe) with something inexpensive (like jeans or black pants). "The costlier item upgrades the entire outfit, giving it a pricey feel," Sommers says.

Hang matching pieces (like suits and sweater sets) separately. "This way you'll think of them as individual items," Sommers says. "A gray blazer may look amazing with a pair of brown pinstriped slacks, but you may not think of it if it's hanging with the matching gray pants."

Stop saving clothes for after 5 p.m.

"There are few items that you can wear only in the evening," says Sommers, who suggests such duos as a chiffon or satin blouse layered under a suit jacket, or metallic-colored shoes teamed with tweed slacks. —M.B.

FIND OUT MORE

For details on Susan Sommers' fashion services, visit www.dresszing.com.