



# ASK THE EXPERT

With appearances on “Today” and “The View,” StyleBakery.com cofounder Alison Deyette knows a thing or two about shopping.

**How can people cultivate a “personal style”—be it with clothes, furniture, or gadgets—as opposed to buying whatever is trendy?**

Find something interesting about yourself and start from there—whether it’s your chic glasses, your always-red lipstick, or even a shock of gray in your hair. These are all the building blocks of signature style.

Figure out what makes you feel good. Do you like a classic trench or a full-length fur? Mid-century furniture or French country? Don’t hesitate to experiment until you find your comfort zone. Next, consider your lifestyle. Do you spend most of your time in jeans shuttling the kids or do you wear a suit 60 hours a week?

Begin accumulating a set of basics that make you feel good, look good, and complement your lifestyle. Then you’ll be ready to



add a few trendy pieces to spice up your basics each season—but don’t spend a lot, since you’ll likely be bored in 6 months.

**How can people be savvier shoppers?**

Buy what you love, not for sale’s sake. At some point, we’ve all suffered from “sale psychosis”—temporary insanity brought on by a not-to-be-believed bargain resulting in a most-regrettable purchase. Just remember: if it’s not something you’d buy at full price, leave it on the rack.

Know when to and when not to splurge. Splurge on quality items you’ll use for years. Scrimp on trendy and one-time-use items.

If there’s a store you particularly like to shop at, sign up for their mailing list and you’ll be the first to know about sales (often unadvertised) or special coupons.

Shop alone or with a trusted friend that has your back. Always try clothes on and shop when you feel good about yourself. Remember to buy only what you will really wear and wear more than once.

**Most of the time we’re pretty good at buying for ourselves, but when it comes to picking out something for another person, we’re a bit lazy. How can people improve their gift-giving skills?**

We forget to ask our loved ones what they really want as opposed to buying what we think they’d like or need. Giving them the opportunity to provide suggestions ensures success, without necessarily ruining the surprise. If they’re shy about hinting, pay attention to their activities, lifestyle, and places they like to shop for gift-giving clues.

I like to keep a little notebook where I jot down ideas year-round, so when the occasion pops up, I’m prepared. The truly organized can even keep a gift closet at home with items picked up along the way with specific recipients in mind. When possible, be sure to include a gift receipt so they can always exchange the gift without fear of hurting your feelings.

*Style expert Alison Deyette appears regularly on such shows as “Today,” “The View,” and TBS’ “Movie and a Makeover,” and currently hosts Fine Living Network’s “Pocket the Difference.” She is also cofounder of StyleBakery.com, an online magazine featuring style solutions, shopping picks, and trend information.*

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- Buyer’s Assurance Plan\*.
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