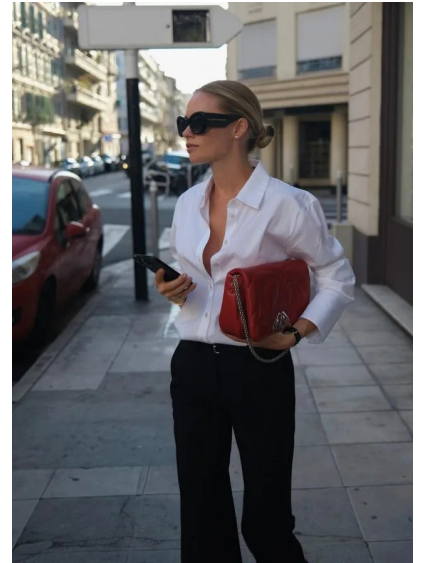


## STYLE

# How To Elevate Your Basics For Fall Like A Fashion Girl

The one where basic is a good thing. Turning the former pejorative into a compliment this fall with the season's dark horse trend.

By Julie Drake Sep 13th 2023 ⌚ 4 min read

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Making a style statement this fall is both easier and harder than you think. If you've been paying attention, you know that 2023 is all about getting back to basics. Meaning, if trends are any indication, the showstoppers in your wardrobe aren't going to be the fuzzy neon sweater or the checkered corduroy overalls you've been saving for a special occasion. The main events are going to be the simple, tried and true pieces you can pair with anything. We're talking basic tees, no-frill jeans, versatile cardigans, and neutral button-ups – all mixed and matched with ease. The clothes are letting the girl shine this season, instead of the other way around.

But while selecting good basics is pretty straightforward (high quality with a great fit), turning them into *a look* is another thing entirely. The key to making basic look good? Impeccable styling. Because while the pieces you're working with are important, they aren't the ones telling the story – the way you utilize them is. An artist not only *has* the best tools, but she knows how to use them.

For example, take this look from Brigitte Pheloung (@acquiredstyle). When the video begins, Brigitte appears a little blah (but still gorgeous) in a basic black tee and jeans. No thought has been put into the look beyond throwing on some clothes (not a crime, but is that the best we can do?). She quickly transforms the look, however, into a flattering outfit with some personality by tucking the shirt in, cuffing the jeans, adding a chic belt and cropped jacket, and accessorizing with a Christian Dior bag

and Ray-Bans (never hurts). What makes these simple changes so transformative and effective? It's that Pheloung knows her style personality, as well as the fundamentals of good styling, and incorporates them both to transform the individual pieces into a cohesive look.

## Three-Word Method

Quick review of style personality: You can find your style personality using the three-word method, which was popularized by stylist Allison Bornstein last summer. Here's the gist: Distill your style (both actual and aspirational) into three words that you can use when buying clothes and creating outfits. The first word is the realistic style word, found by looking in your closet and pulling out the things you wear all the time. What is a common theme connecting all the pieces (examples are "oversized" or "edgy")? There's your first style word.

The second word is the aspirational word, or the style you would like to have. Essentially, the word that comes to mind when looking at your Pinterest or mood board ("fitted" or "romantic"). And finally, the third word is the emotional word, i.e. how do you want to feel in your clothes? How do you imagine your dream wardrobe would make you feel? ("Casual," "sexy," "powerful," "warm".)

We can't get into Pheloung's head, but if we were taking a stab at her style personality, we'd call it casual, chic, cool.

## The Fundamentals

Next, when it comes to styling fundamentals, all you need to remember is to aim for optimal fit, balance, and unity. Ask yourself: Does this outfit fit me perfectly? Does it feel like it was made for me? Is it balanced top to bottom, with neither half overpowering the other? Is it unified by a cohesive aesthetic and color palette? Not that everything has to be matchy-matchy or drawn from only one aesthetic. In fact, mixing styles, colors, and patterns is often key to good style, but it does need to have cohesion and flow. It has to make sense.

One caveat on "fit": We should mention that clothes that "fit" don't always have to be "fitted." Plenty of oversized pieces can still fit well if designed properly. For instance, look no further than this masterclass in oversized dressing from Anjana Dhiman:

She looks like an off-duty model in baggy trousers and a relaxed button-up, in part because the pieces fit well and hang on her frame just right (especially the shoulders and hips). If the clothes were hanging off her shoulders, or even worse, her hips, it would all look a little ridiculous. Her choice of oversized pieces works because they fit

her well while maintaining their oversized quality. The second reason this look works so well is that it is balanced. The top doesn't overpower the bottoms, and vice versa. They match each other's oversized-ness, and are in proportion with one another, as well as with her body.

One final note about fundamentals: Stylists are split on the topic of accessories. Some believe that less is more, and recommend abiding by the rule of thumb to remove one thing before leaving the house. But stylist Allison Bornstein argues the opposite, and proposes that before walking out the door, you should take one last look at your outfit and add a "finishing touch," like a neck scarf or a sweater around your shoulders. She maintains that doing so can take your outfit to the next level, and make it uniquely yours. (As a bohemian maximalist at heart, I have to agree.)

Now that we've covered the basics of basics, let's talk about elevating them for fall, beginning with the cornerstone of fall styling. With all the volume and layers that accompany fall fashion (think trenches over sweaters over turtlenecks), we'd be positively drowning in them without mastering the most important detail of all: the perfect tuck.

## Tuck Ever-Fastening

One thing all fashion girls have down pat is a good tuck. Whether it be a fitted tee tucked tightly into high-waisted jeans, a billowy blouse gathered loosely into trousers, or a casual half tuck with a button-up and sweats, a good tuck is integral to creating balance and a focal point in any given outfit.

One such example of the perfect tuck comes from Megan Ryder's styling of a fitted black tank and high-waisted jeans. Tucking the tank in at her natural waist creates a focal point that is naturally flattering, and lends itself well to balance and proportion. A matching black cardigan pulls the look together for fall, and adding a belt and a cute shoulder bag satisfies the "finishing touch" requirement stylist Allison Bornstein talked about.

## In the Trenches

Layers, layers, layers. Layers are everything for fall. Especially the outermost one that starts with a t and rhymes with "bench" (every good fall outfit has one). A trench coat without exception pulls your outfit together, and can single-handedly take it from boring to soaring. Take these examples shared by Bornstein:

As you can see, a trench coat does everything from helping you embody a classic, chic vibe, to livening up an otherwise very casual outfit, making it feel polished and

dynamic (*sweatsuit gals, where you at*).

## Shoes That Shine

Footwear is important in any season, but even more in fall. Shoe choice is crucial to outfit success in fall, and can be the chef's kiss that puts your look over the top.

Whether it be sleek boots that wow or ballet flats that meow, footwear selection is vital, and has the potential of securing you an A+ in style this semester. Indeed, it is truth as old as time that the shoes make the woman, and shoes never lie.

## Fall Fashion-Forward

As the prolific poet Maya Angelou said, "At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel." And how they feel when you show up looking like a luminous heavenly body is probably very good (especially if they're girl's girls). Because, as we know, a rising tide lifts all boats. The more thought you put into looking and feeling your best, the more it will inspire others to do the same. And when we look and feel good, we live our best life. So don't hesitate to spend a Saturday afternoon in fashion experimentation mode, or plan out your daily outfits the night before. If styling your look to perfection sparks joy, then go all in and let that fashion flag fly. Odds are you won't regret it.

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