

## *What Does Your “Clothes Language” Tell Others About You?*

Have you ever heard the very old saying, “Clothes make the man?” (And, woman?) Clothes speak loudly about who you are and who you want to be. I start planning the night before whom and what I want to portray the next day. Sometimes, like Scarlett O’Hara, I find it very hard to make up mind and, I think “tomorrow is another day” seems to apply. I’ll deal with it in the morning.

During the political season just passed, two women came on the scene with their own distinct languages of dress: Alaska Governor Sarah Palin and Mrs. Michelle Obama. Each of these ladies has broken a portrayal tradition.

The following are some of the common clothing personalities and what is said about the wearer.

*The Sloppy Dresser.* If your clothes are wrinkled, stained, or mismatched, you send the message that you do not care about your appearance, your position in life or future.

*The Designer Dresser.* If every article of your clothing is brand name, and you want everyone to know it, people may take this to mean you are successful, choosy, and “put together,” but they may think you are overly materialistic or even a bit insecure (trying to fit in).

*The Skimpy Dresser.* These people opt for the shortest, the tightest, or the most *décolleté* outfit whether they are going to work, attending an office party, or an outing with the kids. Wearing overly revealing clothing may suggest excessive reliance on the body itself as a message.

*The Business Casual Dresser.* Business casual, when done correctly (i.e. casual loafers, not flip flops), can be a sign of a confident, well-meaning individual.

*The Flashy Dresser.* A fun pair of shoes, a snappy tie, a bright blue handbag or any fashion piece, could depict your wild independent side. Flashy dressers often send the message that they are set apart from the crowd.

*The Drab Dresser.* If you always dress in neutrals and plain slacks and shirts, and never deviate from this style of dress, you may be stating a wish to travel *incognito*.

*The Athletic Dresser.* Athletic dressers wear sweats, running shoes and workout gear around the clock, workout or no workout. This may highlight your athleticism, but be careful. Athletic dressers can easily be mistaken for sloppy dressers, particularly when sweats are involved.

*The Goth Dresser.* “Goth” implies dark makeup and dark clothing. Lots of black, fishnet stockings and maybe a studded collar are often features of goth dressers. While this look may tell some people that you’re expressing your personality, many may see you as depressed, angry, and unapproachable.

*The Casual Dresser.* This is the guy or gal who never puts on anything but jeans and a T-shirt. Fine for a weekend at home, but over time this look can make you appear one-sided, or lacking a creative flair or dimension.

In reality, most of us are a combination of clothing styles. We might wear casual clothes one day, and business garb the next. The key to using clothing to your advantage is to dress so that you feel ready to take on the world.

Performance coach Larina Kase, PsyD, MBA, president of Performance and Success Coaching LLC in Philadelphia, says she has found that putting on a flattering outfit motivates her to actually go to the gym or exercise outdoors in public.

A few simple tips:

1. Wear clothing that’s flattering for your figure.
2. Remember that clothing does not need to be expensive to look good.
3. Dress suitably for the occasion (business attire for work is a must).
4. Don’t be afraid to show your personality by using color, unique clothing cuts or accessories.
5. Do step outside of your fashion comfort zone sometimes. For instance, if you always dress in jeans and t-shirts, put on a well-tailored suit and see how it makes you feel.
6. Have fun with your clothing. Don’t take it too seriously.
7. Only wear clothing that makes you feel good.
8. Get rid of clothes with which you associate negative things (sweatshirt you wore for a month after your divorce).
9. Do get “dressed” daily. It is easy to slip into a pattern of throwing on anything. Try putting on something special even when it is not a “special day,” and take notice of the change in your attitude.
10. Don’t worry about keeping up with trends, but do update your clothing regularly (and get rid of items from past decades).

What do Sarah Palin’s and Michelle Obama’s “clothes language” say about them? Most important, what does your clothes language reveal about you?

Mark Twain embellished upon the ancient saying about the effect of what we wear. He wrote, “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.”