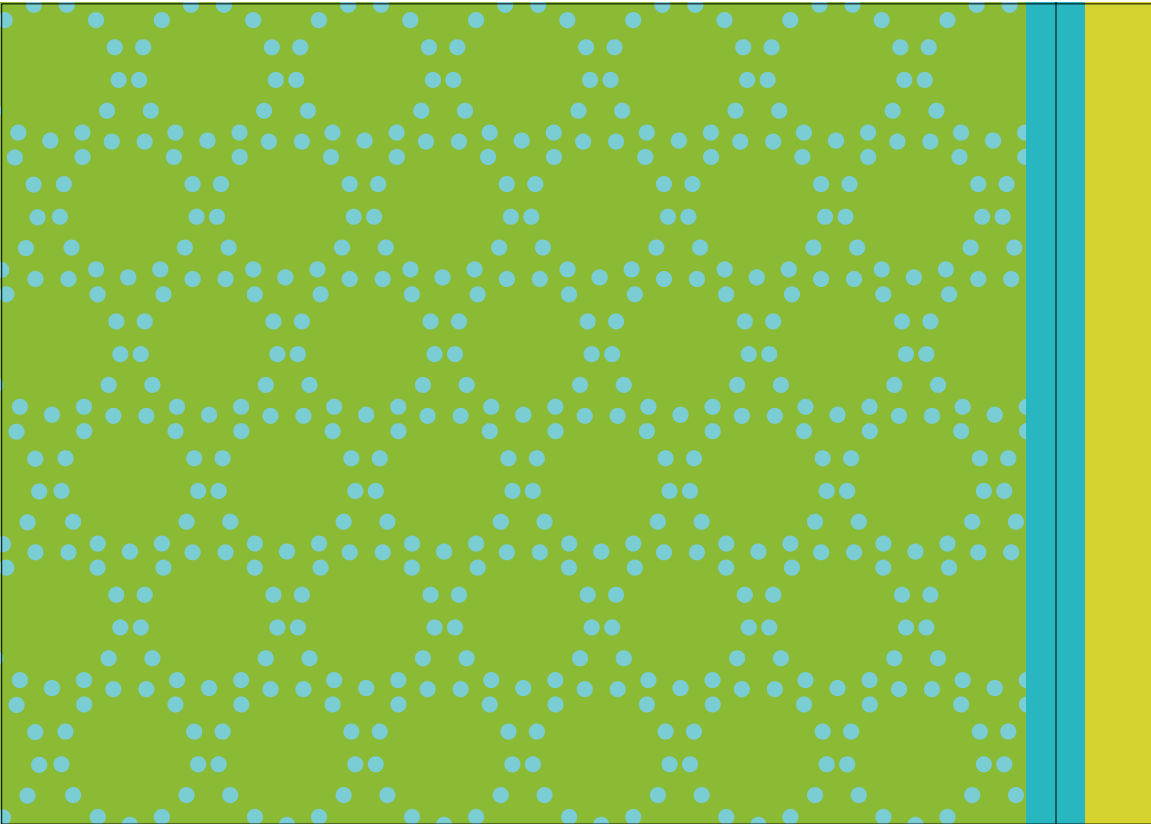


STEAL THIS STYLE



STEAL THIS STYLE

MOMS AND DAUGHTERS
SWAP WARDROBE
SECRETS

LOOKS THAT MAKE HIP CLASSIC AND CLASSIC COOL

S H E R R I E M A T H I E S O N



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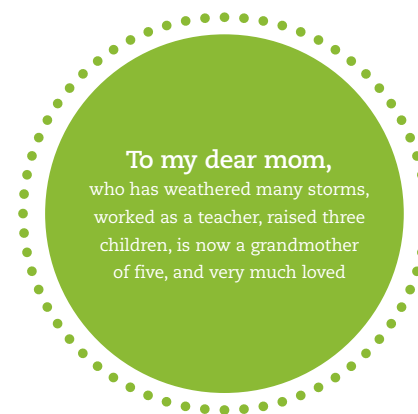
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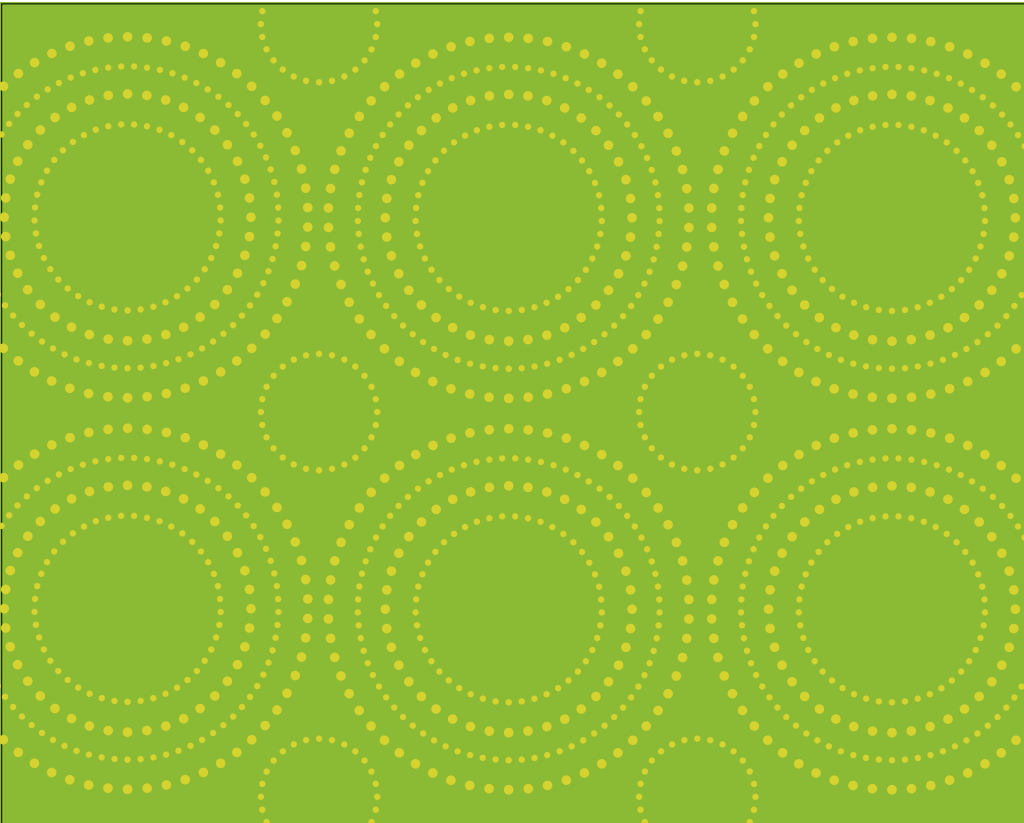
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First Edition





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introduction

What Comes Around Goes Around . . .*

“Children get older, I’m getting older, too . . .”

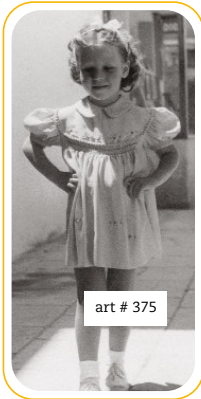
—Stevie Nicks, “Landslide”

No sooner had I donned my hat as a self-appointed casting agent and begun my pursuit of mothers and daughters who met my purpose for this book—moms whose style sense needed reinvention with some fresh ideas from their offspring—than I was met with an almost universal cry for help. This plea resounded not only from the baby boomer moms I interviewed, but also from their hopeful daughters, who furtively confessed that their fondest wish was for their moms to look as good as their daughters knew they could. These young women would gladly leave their closet doors ajar so Mom could steal a choice item or two. If they could just convince her to cross the threshold! And what items? Showing moms what they could take from their daughters’ (and in a couple of cases, granddaughters’) closets became my mission.

*Hey, sometimes it’s a good thing!

Take It with a Twist

One notion that all the moms agreed on was that as we get older we have to navigate some pretty murky fashion waters in search of modern pieces that are right for our age and physicality. After all, we really can't duplicate what our daughters are wearing exactly. It's a matter of degree. The key is to build a bridge between timeless styles and current looks. We do this by first acquiring a collection of core pieces that endure, in ever-changing



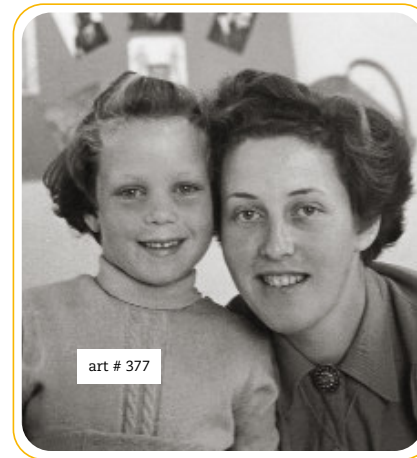
youthful cuts and color palettes, and then mixing them with a rich variety of accessories (both classic and trendy) that give an intentional nod to what's on the newsstands.

In that spirit, *Steal This Style* is dedicated to exploring the fun enterprise of getting dressed well, with plenty of advice on how to successfully decode the

often-illusory current fashion and youth scenes. The good news is there's plenty you can take from a variety of younger generations. We might have been the ones who helped start the fashion revolution (not to mention a few others) oh-so-many years ago—the “latest” styles (bootleg jeans, shift dresses) are often taken straight from the pages of our high school yearbooks and reinterpreted. Ironic, isn't it? But why not keep that youthful exuberance alive in our wardrobes?

Our Roots of Style

Think for a moment about where your style began and how it has changed or stalled over the years. Perhaps you started out as I did. As a young girl, I was dressed by my mother, who, given the dictates of the time, was conservative and ladylike in her own look. Unlike today, simple but well-made skirt suits and dresses made from natural fibers such as silk, cotton, and wool were the norm for women in the 1940s and 1950s. My mom, a talented knitter, created adorable, one-of-a-kind outfits for me. She often completed my look with a big satin or grosgrain ribbon in my hair. Today the only children who still wear similarly charming,



classic, and custom-looking outfits seem to live on Park Avenue.

My most vivid clothing memories, however, are the ones I created myself. I suspect many of you also took long but memorable detours off the fashion freeway before settling on wherever it is you've arrived now. It took me a while to under-

stand the beautiful elements of the classic style my mother favored as a young woman. Let's face it: the '60s happened, and, well, wow! All bets were off. My picture album bears witness to my experimentation. It was a challenge for my girlfriends and me to keep up with new styles—so much so it kept us up at night!

The pieces that were coming from designers filled me with aesthetic adrenaline. I had my grandmother, a seamstress, re-create suits I imagined Audrey H. and Jackie O. would have worn. In the '70s I embraced hot pants as some do religion. They were often made from suede, or even fully sequined, and extremely abbreviated—the less the merrier (oh, no . . . oh, yes). Those were the days of fakery deluxe. False eyelashes, artificial “falls” (hairpieces), and scarves on the head worn with large gold earrings were all part of the look.

Clothes were my way of showing my creativity and high-fashion bent. I, like many of you, was just “doing my thing”—experimenting and having fun, using myself as a guinea pig and model. Our age and the era gave us a pass on being “appropriate”—even the most out-there fads looked completely suitable. My mother tried to

block the doorway (fearing for my safety in these outlandish ensembles) and asked, “You’re not really going out that way . . . are you?” Yes, I always did! Funny thing is, you could still be hearing that same fateful question, but it is probably no longer coming from your mother. It may well be your daughter who is now concerned about your look.

The Stylish Art of Translation

This role reversal isn’t terribly surprising. A lot of us are confused, and as a result are either stuck in the past or have simply given up and wear what’s easy, which is not necessarily what’s most flattering. In my work as a style consultant, women clients always ask me, “What is appropriate?”—it’s suddenly become important to us again. These motivated women come from a variety of backgrounds, are of different ages, and work in all sorts of occupations and fields. They want clothing solutions that are tailored to their lifestyles, personalities, and changing physiques.

To guide them correctly, I formed a truly workable wardrobe theory grounded in classics, but which also included the habit of constantly

reassessing clients’ and my own attire to remain totally modern. I abandoned my taste for extreme styles long ago, and, after donating a bale of trendy clothes to charity, I made a mental note of what *never* to revisit (e.g., extremely wide shoulder pads and excessive bling, to name just two). Updated classicism handily provides an ageless look while forming a solid foundation for what I call the art of the mix, or the ability to add in trendier pieces, combine designers, and mingle styles. With this groundwork, any woman can individualize with accessories and separates that express her unique personality and interests.

The art of the mix . . . sounds good, doesn’t it? You’re no doubt wondering how you make such a wardrobe shift—and where your daughter (or the younger generation) fits in. Well, it starts with observation. Generational interplay keeps us from stagnation. Curiosity keeps our minds fresh and encourages a natural eagerness to grow. This is great news, in my estimation. To that end, why shouldn’t you take the time to observe women ten, even twenty, years your junior and “borrow” judiciously from their choices, always translating to suit your body, your age, and your lifestyle?

Consider your personal style afresh every five years—at least—and a youthful flair may more easily enter your closet.

When Bad Clothes Happen to Good People

Unfortunately, reinterpreting what the younger generation is wearing leaves the margin for error wide open—and that may be the reason we are reluctant to change. Without a fine understanding of how to take the best and leave the rest, we can easily misinterpret twenty- and thirtysomething style and end up looking even older. We run the risk of appearing either painfully desperate to look young, or silly and immature. On the other hand, we can easily age ourselves by resigning ourselves to wearing the same old, same old.

AARP’s invitation to join when you hit fifty doesn’t mean you automatically become a charter member of a crazy hat club or a purple boa society. Being a baby boomer does not give you license to don an absurd outfit! Nor is it a signal to turn to those clothing stores that are advertised specifically for our age group. You know the ones: they sell dowdy, boxy, voluminous jackets; pull-on

pants; gaudy floral blouses; gauze broomstick skirts; and faux ethnic jewelry. Did you correctly suspect all along that the result is an “instant old” look?

Yes, I know some of you may get compliments on your novelty knits and appliquéd shirts. When we meet each other we want to connect, so we comment on anything we can in order to start a conversation, and often it is the wreath attached to your cardigan or the reindeer dangling from your ears. Don’t be fooled by the kind words—they are merely conversational ploys.

Can you consider abandoning those paths in favor of a healthier, and prettier, road? The trip requires a bit of self-indulgence and self-care. Feeling and looking great—and feminine—on a daily basis makes a positive difference in your life. Vanity is good—healthy vanity, that is: the kind that encourages fitness and vitality, and, yes, the desire to keep looking your best. Clothing—how you present yourself to the world—is all part of a

Vanity is good!

well-rounded, balanced, and healthful lifestyle. The enthusiastic pursuit of good looks is definitely something we can borrow from our daughters.

Modus Operandi

Given my experience creating *Steal This Style*, I've seen that daughters are more than willing to share their ideas with their moms. But don't we want to give them something stylishly worthwhile in trade? If you think about it, we pass along more than our genes to our daughters; we are passing along our sense of style, too. In the past we had style icons, famous women who inspired

us and taught us about style with their appearance. It's not too late for us to become those women today, for the next generation. Looking modern allows us to connect to the younger generation and pass along to them the beauty of timeless dressing in a fun and spirited way. The message we send should not be in the form of a red and black knit suit, pink and gray velour sweats, or a snowman sweater vest. Let's banish the word "senior," and the looks that conjure the word, from our vocabulary and our closets.

To that end, as you view the Never Cool photos, you may recognize (*ahem*) your neighbor. I use a touch of humor in describing the Never Cool mistakes shown here, with an understanding that these errors are easy to make for all of us because of force of habit, lack of knowledge, utter confusion, and little exposure to good accessible alternatives.

Study the Forever Cool photographs by taking careful notice of how separates are paired and how accessories are mixed together. The looks that the moms and their daughters are wearing rarely come from a single designer or store—their success lies not in a preplanned combination

thought up by a single guru, but in the artful mix of the best-quality ingredients. That's why the Forever Cool ideas and looks presented within these pages are here for the long haul, and wearing them guarantees positive results.

Though it may be tempting, don't just use the book as a fan and flip through it quickly while laughing at the Never Cools. Take the time not just to consider all the photos, but also to read the captions. Find yourself in the Forever Cool styles that apply best to your figure and preferences. Then take the book shopping, or use it while selecting (or clearing out) items from your closet. *Steal This Style* is a tool, and it's the next best thing to me taking you on a shopping trip, something I enjoy doing for clients. Sharing the book with your daughter or a younger friend is a chance to engage her and start a conversation as well. It works: a remarkable thing happened during the making of this book—my duos grew closer and more stylish. Clothes are remarkably powerful!

Being a baby boomer
does not give you
license to don an
absurd outfit!

