



The Marker Method

by Carol Foster
Copyright 2003, MyPersonalStyle

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <u>Welcome</u> | 1 |
| <u>Accessing Your Wardrobe</u> | 2 |
| <u>An Introduction to Closet Cleanouts</u> | 2 |
| <u>Who should do it?</u> | 2 |
| <u>When should I do it?</u> | 3 |
| <u>Why should I do it?</u> | 3 |
| <u>How should I do it?</u> | 3 |
| <u>Dividing and Conquering Your Wardrobe</u> | 4 |
| <u>The Marker Method, Part 1</u> | 4 |
| <u>The Marker Method</u> | 4 |
| <u>How Does it Work?</u> | 4 |
| <u>The Eighty/Twenty Rule</u> | 5 |
| <u>Time for another marker</u> | 6 |
| <u>Seeing Your Way Clear</u> | 7 |
| <u>The Marker Method, Part 2</u> | 7 |
| <u>Doesn't Fit</u> | 7 |
| <u>Too Small</u> | 8 |
| <u>Too Large</u> | 8 |
| <u>Little Things Mean a Lot</u> | 8 |
| <u>Missing Pieces</u> | 8 |
| <u>Repairs</u> | 9 |
| <u>Progress Report</u> | 10 |
| <u>Laying a Foundation</u> | 11 |
| <u>The Marker Method, Part 3</u> | 11 |
| <u>When Opportunity Doesn't Knock</u> | 11 |
| <u>Accounting for Taste</u> | 12 |
| <u>Progress Report</u> | 13 |
| <u>Ready for Wardrobe Planning</u> | 13 |
| <u>Time for Another Marker</u> | 14 |
| <u>What About Everything Else?</u> | 14 |

Welcome

Hello! Thank you for your interest in MyPersonalStyle. We hope you enjoy this ebook, and that it helps you achieve your wardrobe goals.

The chapters in this free ebook were previously published as a series of four articles by Carol Foster on the MyPersonalStyle.com website.

- Accessing Your Wardrobe – An Introduction to Closet Cleanouts
- The Marker Method Pt. 1 – Dividing and Conquering your Wardrobe
- The Marker Method Pt. 2 – Seeing your Way Clear
- The Marker Method Pt. 3 – Laying a Foundation

Carol Foster is a Style and Wardrobe consultant with more than twenty years in the industry. She is the editor of MyPersonalStyle.com and Fashionline.

This electronic publication is completely free of charge, and you are welcome to share it in its current format with friends and colleagues. However, it is copyrighted material, and is not to be reproduced in any other format and may not be excerpted or distributed in any other form without express written permission of the author.

For more ebooks about beauty, style, fashion, and wardrobe planning, visit the MyPersonalStyle [Ebook Shop](#).

Accessing Your Wardrobe



An Introduction to Closet Cleanouts

Have you ever started cleaning out your closet and gotten so frustrated you had to quit? Perhaps you have wondered whether such a thing is necessary, or more likely, you know you need to do it, but are reluctant to start. Before you attempt any major project, it is always best to ask (and answer) some important questions:

Who should do it?

Closet cleanouts are not for everyone, but if your personal style or your hectic life has left you with a crowded or overly-messy closet that may or may not contain a "Wardrobe," the benefits can be enormous. It's a question of how uncrowded and orderly you need your closet to be in order to be happy with its functionality. This will vary with each individual but, if closet jumble is an ongoing problem for you, it will inevitably get worse over time. You will accumulate more and the problem will snowball.

When deciding if a closet cleanout is for you, always keep this in mind: If you already have a closet strategy that works for you, you don't have to change what you are doing. In fact, you should try *not* to change things that are working. If only some of what you are doing works, just read along. You may pick up some pointers that you can integrate into your existing strategy.

The Marker Method

Cleaning out your closet is just that—cleaning it out. It is *not* organizing your closet although a great deal of that will occur as a happy coincidence. Most likely you will experience a lot of happy coincidences—everything from insights about your personal style to found garments. But the major focus is simply clearing your closet of everything and anything you are not wearing now—cutting through the clutter.

When should I do it?

It's a good idea to start a closet cleanout near the beginning of a season and finish before the beginning of the next season. You don't want to be in the middle of doing your cleanout when the weather changes. Working with swimsuits and winter jackets at the same time would be more than a little cumbersome.

Why should I do it?

Your wardrobe is now, but your closet is full of yesterday, tomorrow, and Lord-knows-when. Cleaning out frees up space which allows you to collect what you are wearing now (that is to say, your actual wardrobe) into one place so you can eventually deal with it without distractions.

It's hard to see your way clear if your view is obstructed by superfluous things. Garments that worked for you in the past and others that may or may not work for you sometime in the near or distant future have a way of keeping you from your real wardrobe. Put another way, it's difficult to put together the simplest jigsaw puzzle when you can't see all the pieces!

How should I do it?

You'll be pleased to know that cleaning out your closet needn't be an ordeal, or even unpleasant. The conventional method of taking everything from your closet and throwing it on your bed still has its adherents, but most people don't have the big blocks of time or the energy to approach it in this manner.

I have developed my own method of proceeding toward functional order in small steps, starting and stopping whenever it's convenient for you. It's a quick and easy way to clean out your closet in literally minutes per day. It's called The Marker Method, and it's the subject of the next three chapters.

Dividing and Conquering Your Wardrobe



The Marker Method, Part 1

Although there are some who have the time and stamina to do an entire wardrobe purge in one fell swoop, I would say they are few and far between. Most of us procrastinate because we have other screaming priorities to attend to, and we think this is going to be a huge, unpleasant ordeal.

The Marker Method

I have good news, and I call it the "Marker" Method. How does it work? It works like a charm. What do you need to do it? Almost nothing at all.

The Marker Method has four major advantages over any other technique: First, it's incredibly simple to do. Second, it works well even for people who don't like to organize. Third, you never have to make any irreversible decisions. Fourth, it breaks down so easily into small pieces that you can do it in literally seconds per day, without losing track, and never end up with a heap of clothes on your bed that you forget about until it's bedtime.

How Does it Work?

To get started, take a hanger and something with which to mark it. A length of colored yarn will work just fine. Tie a bow on the hanger neck. Hang it back on your closet rod as far to the right as you can.

The Marker Method

Now take another piece of yarn and lay it on the closet floor to the right of your shoes. Put another piece of yarn in your scarf drawer. Another on your belt rack, and more wherever you store items you wear (or don't wear, as the case may be), always placing the yarn to the right of these items.

The next time you disrobe, simply place the items you've worn to the right of their respective markers. Some items will go into the laundry of course but your shoes, for example, will go on the right of the yarn marker on the floor. When you are putting away your clean laundry, put each piece to the right of its marker.

The Eighty/Twenty Rule

What are we accomplishing here? We're separating the clothes we actually wear from those we don't. And we're spending something like two seconds a day on the process. Furthermore, this sorting doesn't have the same drawbacks associated with a conventional closet cleanout. You haven't thrown anything away, so you haven't made any mistakes. You never worried for a moment that you might be making the wrong decision, because the only decision you have made is "am I going to wear this today?"

After a month or so, you will have a group of items on the right of the marker that "have you covered." This is your actual wardrobe, and it will usually be about twenty percent of what's hanging in your closet. And it is sufficient to get you through a month. You know this because it did get you through a month.



Now, what about the eighty percent that's still to the left of your markers? You may need them sometime, but you have proof positive that you don't need them now. You might need one of these "someday" items when the weather changes, for instance. Good thing you didn't throw them away!

The Marker Method

Time for another marker

Use a different color yarn and mark a hanger, and place markers in your drawers, etc., this time placing them on the left. Go through the items to the left of the first marker one by one and ask yourself, "Have I not worn this because of the season?" For example, it's July and the item is a winter coat, or it's December and the item is a pair of shorts. Put these items to the left of your new marker.

You can stop when you've done one item or continue through your entire wardrobe. If you stop, use another marker to indicate where you stopped. When you return later you can pick up exactly where you left off. You never have to throw everything back into your closet and start at square one later just because you ran out of time or energy. In fact, you could take a nap right now if you want, because your bed isn't covered with clothes!

When you are finished, your wardrobe will be divided into three functional categories. On the right will be everything you are wearing. On the left will be everything you aren't wearing because the season is wrong. Everything else will be in the middle.



Seeing Your Way Clear



The Marker Method, Part 2

If you have gone through the steps in the first part of "The Marker Method," your wardrobe will now be divided into three distinct groups: Out of Season (everything on the left), Unsorted (everything in the middle), and your Current—or *Actual*—Wardrobe (everything on the right.)

The remaining steps of the Marker Method will continue to sort through the middle "Unsorted" section of your clothes and accessories, subdividing them into functional categories. You'll need more markers, preferably in different colors, and you might want to jot notes to remind yourself what the markers represent.

Doesn't Fit...

"Doesn't Fit" isn't a functional category of its own. For one thing, some of us have weight fluctuations that require more than a one-size wardrobe. Items that are too large right now may be just right later (and everything else will be too small). For this reason, items that don't fit should be grouped into "Too Small" and "Too Large" using two more markers.

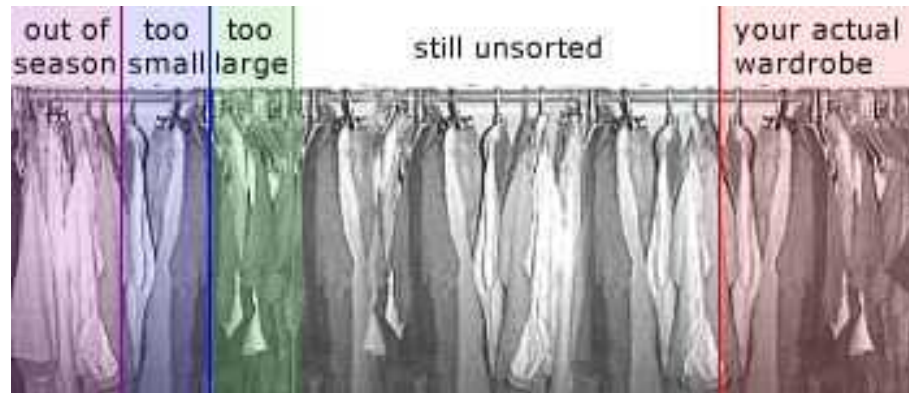
The Marker Method

Too Small...

Put up a new marker and go through each unsorted item asking the question: "Is the only reason I'm not wearing this because it is too small?" A "Yes" answer means it gets placed to the left of your new marker. If the answer is "No," then the item stays put—for now.

Too Large...

Cull items that are too large in exactly the same way. This time, ask the question: "Is the only reason I'm not wearing this because it's too large?" Deal with these items as you have dealt with the previous ones, placing them to the left of your unsorted items and marking with a new marker.



Little Things Mean a Lot

You probably haven't done too much culling from your racks, drawers, and shelves yet because accessories are less likely to be disqualified by the questions we have been asking thus far. This situation is most likely about to change! Most women have drawers full of scarves or other accessories they never wear and at least some broken jewelry.

Don't focus on your major garments to the exclusion of your accessories. The following marker categories will yield tremendous results in your accessory drawers.

Missing Pieces

Time for another marker. The question this time: "Is the reason I'm not wearing this because I don't have what I need to go with it?" Example: The hems on these slacks are narrow and you broke a heel off of your high-heeled mules. This dress needs a scarf to make it more flattering. These slacks need a wider or more narrow belt to fit the belt loops.

The Marker Method

I usually call this grouping "Missing Pieces," because that is why they aren't being worn. This category is the basis for building a shopping list. You know what is needed to make these items functional, i.e., part of your wardrobe. In the examples above, new mules, a new scarf and a new belt will give you two pairs of slacks and a dress to wear!

It's not a bad idea to tag each of these items with a note to remind yourself of what is missing. Don't include items that have missing buttons or need a new zipper; these items will be marked "Repairs."



Repairs

The next three markers are for various levels of repairs.

1. Minor Repairs: a loose button, for example
2. Major Repairs: including makeovers
3. Impossible Repairs: those items which are virtually impossible for you or anyone else on the face of the earth to make wearable

The first group is those things that will take less than an hour to repair. The second group is those things that will take a substantial amount of time to make wearable – more than an hour at any rate.

The third group is included to provide perspective and because there are women who not only have these items but will persist in keeping them. They may have some salvage value, but only you know if you will ever get around to that. If it's your personal style to toss these items, go right ahead and do it. If you can't bear to part with them yet, just group them with the third marker and pray for divine intervention—or divine inspiration, at least!

The Marker Method

Progress Report

When the foregoing sorting is complete, your closet, drawers, shelves, etc., will be divided up into the following categories:

1. Out of Season
2. Doesn't Fit
 - ◆ Too Small
 - ◆ Too Large
3. Missing Pieces
4. Repairs
 - ◆ Minor Repairs
 - ◆ Major Repairs
 - ◆ Impossible Repairs
5. Unsorted
6. Your Actual Wardrobe



By now, it should be obvious why you have "a closet full of clothes and nothing to wear." But you should also be getting a pretty good idea what it's going to take to solve that problem.

Don't max your credit cards shopping just yet, though, because the final stages of the Marker Method will help you get more value out of those seemingly hopeless items still hanging in your closet!

Laying a Foundation



The Marker Method, Part 3

In Part One, we began the Marker Method process by dividing your wardrobe into three distinct groups: Out of Season, Unsorted, and Current—or *Actual*—Wardrobe. In Part Two, we began subdividing everything in the Unsorted category into more functional categories. At this point, anything left hanging in the middle (Unsorted) probably falls into one of two major categories: Things you would have worn had the opportunity arisen, and things you didn't wear because you don't like them.

When Opportunity Doesn't Knock

Some items are not "everyday" items. A red sequined gown, for instance, hangs in your closet waiting for the right occasion. If the occasion doesn't arise, you don't wear it. These kinds of items can be further subdivided into two groupings. There are those that you will probably wear eventually, and those that you won't. The question is: "Is the occasion for this item likely to occur?"

You may find some dressy items you wear when you go out to a fine restaurant. You may find camping clothes. They might be "once in a blue moon" items like the red sequined gown, for example. If the occasion *will* arise eventually, these things belong in your wardrobe, so go ahead and put them there, to the right of your existing marker along with your current wardrobe.

The Marker Method

On the other hand, if you have discontinued the activity for which an article of clothing would work, start a new marker and put these items to the left. The marker could be called "Lifestyle Mismatches." For example, let's say you used to go camping with your "ex." You hate camping. Since he is your "ex" and you hate camping, you'll probably not be camping again. Or perhaps you've changed careers or retired and the sorts of things you used to wear are not appropriate any more. "Maternity" might be another "never again" grouping. This grouping would also include your prom dress and the muu muu you purchased for the company's theme picnic three years ago. These things don't fit your lifestyle and are therefore no longer part of your wardrobe. Put them to the left and flag them so you never have to sort through them again.

Later, when you have time, review these culled items. There are often valuable lessons to be learned from them. Sometimes you'll realize you really miss some of your former activities. If so, instead of getting rid of the clothing, perhaps you will want to make some changes in your lifestyle. Get around to doing what you haven't been getting around to doing!

Accounting for Taste

Everyone has things in their wardrobe they don't like. If you haven't had to wear them, consider yourself lucky! What to do with these "perfectly good" items that you don't wear simply because you don't like them? Ask the question, "Why don't I like this?" If the answer is, "I don't know," or "I'm not sure," this requires a new category. On the other hand, if you *do* know what you don't like about a given article of clothing, it will be treated differently, often by moving it to one of the previously designated Repair categories.

If you know why you don't like something, this means you now know more than you did when you bought it! Can the problem be resolved in some way?

For instance, suppose you don't like a blouse because of its neckline. Perhaps a new scarf would cover that neckline and save the blouse. In this case, tag the blouse and place it with your "Missing Pieces" group. Perhaps you don't like an overblouse because its hem falls at the broadest part of your hips. Tag it and place it with your "Minor Repairs." If you dislike a dress because there is too much bulk in it and it could be cut more narrow, hang it with your Major Repairs.

If you can't think of any remedy for a problem item, this is great opportunity for learning. Send a photo of yourself wearing this item to the MyPersonalStyle [Outfit Clinic](#) and let us have a look.

If you aren't sure why you don't like a particular item, this falls into another category. It's an even greater learning opportunity. Here again, submit your photo to the Outfit Clinic and

The Marker Method

we'll suggest a course of action.

Progress Report

By now there should be nothing left hanging in the middle, nothing left unsorted. Your Wardrobe should be hanging on the right. Your closets and drawers should closely resemble the following arrangement:

1. Out of Season
2. Doesn't Fit
 - ◆ Too Small
 - ◆ Too Large
3. Missing Pieces
4. Repairs
 - ◆ Minor Repairs
 - ◆ Major Repairs
 - ◆ Impossible Repairs
5. Lifestyle Mismatches
6. Don't Like
 - ◆ Unknown reason
 - ◆ Unknown remedy
7. **Your Actual Wardrobe**



Ready for Wardrobe Planning

Congratulations! You have successfully laid the foundation necessary to plan your wardrobe effectively. You know what you have, what you need to get, and what you need to do. You know what your wardrobe is and what it isn't, and you know why all those clothes are not your actual wardrobe. You may not be thrilled with the wardrobe that remains, but hopefully it is relatively flattering and appropriate and you have enough garments for variety so as not to be seen as eccentric. And certainly enough so as to have something clean to

The Marker Method

wear every day. There was a wardrobe in your closet, and you found it.

If you're not satisfied with your wardrobe, upgrading it will be much easier now that you know what you have to work with. Your wardrobe may be smaller than you thought it was, but it is now more manageable and easily manipulated. You are well-positioned to upgrade.

Time for Another Marker

When the seasons change and the weather has you pulling items from your Out of Season group, or you are out shopping for new fashion finds, it's time to start over again. Of course, you'll have far less to deal with this time around.

When the weather makes your current wardrobe your "Wardrobe Past," slide it to the left and start filling that empty space with a new Wardrobe Present. Don't be too quick to start packing things away, though, as you may not be quite done with the previous season's wardrobe. Beware of "Indian Summers," freak cold snaps, etc. When you have to wear one of these items, return it to the original "Wardrobe Past" section. When you wear multi-seasonal items such as blue jeans that you will wear all year long, hang them with your Wardrobe Present.

What About Everything Else?

Typically, the majority of what hangs in your closet and fills your drawers is not your wardrobe. Some things need repaired, some need to be stored elsewhere, and some should probably be donated or thrown out. I call these items Closet Freeloaders, items that don't pull their weight. To get started weeding these items from your closet and making room for your new improved wardrobe, read [Closet Freeloaders](#). This online series of articles on MyPersonalStyle focuses on each of these kinds of closet decoration, starting with Missing Pieces and Minor Repairs.