

Getting the look right



Start early and design a plan of action to guarantee you have the time to find affordable attire you will love.

Guide to shopping smart for the prom

Graduation and prom season can be an exciting time in a teenager's life. This time in a young person's life marks a rite of passage and a pivotal time bridging childhood and adulthood while giving students the opportunity to let loose and celebrate their academic successes. Prom also serves as a way to make memories with a group of friends who may go in different directions after graduation.

Many students are eager to begin planning their prom experiences as early as possible. Promgoers may want to begin browsing stores and shopping for prom apparel in the months leading up to the big night, but it's important to follow a few bits of advice before making any prom purchases.

• Pay attention to the rules implemented by the school or venue. It's time to follow one last directive before graduation, and that means heeding the requirements for prom at-

tire and any other rules they may have. Some schools implement dress codes, so learn if your school has one so you do not spend money on clothing that will be inappropriate. School personnel have the right to refuse entry to the prom if dress guidelines are not met. Choose a private occasion, such as a graduation party, if you want to wear something less traditional.

• Shop early and shop sales. Waiting until the last minute to purchase prom dresses or tuxes is not ideal, as the pickings might be slim. Begin your search early so you have more options and more time to find attire that fits your budget.

• Shop further away from home, if necessary. Broaden your horizons to shops and retailers outside of your town, if necessary. This may guarantee that your attire isn't a carbon copy of what everyone else is wearing — or a complete duplicate of another student's outfit. Look for independent retail-

ers, such as mom-and-pop boutiques, which may carry more unique and diverse offerings than big retailers. Such stores may offer more personalized service as well, such as alterations and tailoring.

• Fit clothing to your current size. Some students hope to lose a little weight prior to prom. But it's best to avoid purchasing a gown or suit in a size you hope to be, as it's easier to alter clothing to smaller sizes than make sizes bigger.

• Browse magazines for inspiration. Professional stylists are often behind the amazing looks of magazine spreads. Take inspiration from their ideas, but also make the looks your own with some modifications. It may be a different accessory or color pairing. Don't be afraid to take a magazine to a store and ask if they have similar pieces.

• Be open to new ideas. Sometimes the clothing you see on the pages of magazines may seem to be the

ideal style for you, but keep yourself open to other cuts, colors and designs. An outfit you never imagined wearing may end up being the perfect fit.

• Know store return and exchange policies. Formalwear is frequently governed by different rules from casual clothing. All sales may be final, or there may be a small window of time for exchanges. Keep your receipts in a safe place and be aware of return policies, in case prom plans change.

• Consider renting or borrowing. Niche businesses have sprung up that enable customers to rent gowns or suits for a day or two. The costs may be less than purchasing new outfits. Otherwise, see if an older sibling or a friend may have promwear you can borrow.

Prom season involves shopping trips to find the perfect promwear. Start early and design a plan of action to guarantee you have the time to find affordable attire you will really love.

Corsage dos and don'ts

Flowers and formal events go hand in hand. Both women and men may wear flowers at weddings, graduations and dances.

A corsage is a small bundle of flowers that is pinned to the lapel area of a woman's clothing or tied around her wrist. Some people get creative and wear corsages in their hair or on their ankles.

Corsages get their name from the French bouquet de corsage, meaning a grouping of flowers for the bodice. Initially, corsages were attached to the bodice of a dress and wearers believed the corsages helped to ward off evil spirits.

While corsage fashion may have changed, they remain incredibly popular today. Male promgoers typically give their dates corsages before heading off for the festivities, and promgoers or others wearing corsages to formal events may want to consider the following corsage dos and don'ts.

DO order corsages at least two weeks to a month in advance so that the florist will have time to order the necessary flowers. Expect certain flowers, such as orchids and pink and white roses, to be in demand. Ordering early ensures you get the flowers you want.

DON'T forget to talk to your date about clothing color schemes and style of dress, as corsages often are matched to the gown. Florists can customize the corsage based on the length, style and color of what a date is wearing.

DO ask if the gown has straps. This will help you decide whether or not to purchase a corsage that pins near the bodice or one with a wrist strap.

DON'T feel the need to match the corsage and boutonniere exactly. While they may feature the same flowers, it is not necessary for them to have the same ribbon or bloom.

DO go easy on your date and let him know if you prefer a certain flower or style of corsage. In addition, mention if you have any allergies to certain flowers so your corsage does not trigger an attack.

DON'T be embarrassed to discuss budget with a florist. If you have a certain price in mind, mention your budget as you look for the right corsage. Then choose an arrangement that falls in your price range.

DO experiment with handmade corsages if you are handy. Amateur florists can try their hand at making corsages for their dates, who may be especially impressed and moved by homemade corsages. Make a corsage from fresh or silk flowers or create a "bloom" from ribbon. There are plenty of tutorials and tips for corsage tricks. Visit a craft center for more inspiration and materials.

DON'T be shy about exploring the modern and trendy ideas in corsages. Corsages can be a method of self-expression, and there's no limit to their style, size and placement. Tiny blooms can be grouped together to make a corsage bracelet or a corsage ring.

DO keep corsages cool until they are used. Store them in a refrigerator to prevent the flowers from drying out prematurely. Afterward, consider drying the corsage to save as a memento.

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