# How to Build a Capsule Wardrobe (Step by Step)

Personal Care and Style · about 16 minutes · 2026-11-11

A fully illustrated 28-step guide to building a capsule wardrobe you actually wear: audit what you own, set a palette and a real-life dress code, fill only the gaps you can name, then maintain it with a simple rotation.

## Phase 1 — Empty the Wardrobe and See What Is Really There

1. **Take every item out of the wardrobe**
   Take every item out of the wardrobe.
2. **Sort into keep, donate and repair piles**
   Sort into keep, donate and repair piles.
3. **Try on everything in the maybe pile**
   Try on everything in the maybe pile.
4. **Count what you actually wear**
   Count what you actually wear.
5. **Note which colours repeat**
   Note which colours repeat.
6. **Identify your three most-worn outfits**
   Identify your three most-worn outfits.
7. **Write down what is always missing**
   Write down what is always missing.

## Phase 2 — Set the Palette and Define the Core

8. **Pick one neutral base colour**
   Pick one neutral base colour.
9. **Choose two accent colours**
   Choose two accent colours.
10. **Define your real-life dress code**
    Define your real-life dress code.
11. **Set a target number of items**
    Set a target number of items.
12. **List the versatile tops and bottoms**
    List the versatile tops and bottoms.
13. **Choose one outer layer**
    Choose one outer layer.
14. **Pick shoes that go with everything**
    Pick shoes that go with everything.

## Phase 3 — Fill the Gaps, Slowly

### 15. Turn your gaps into a written list

Turn your gaps into a written list.

### 16. Buy only one item at a time

Buy only one item at a time.

### 17. Prioritise fabric and fit over trend

Prioritise fabric and fit over trend.

### 18. Test each new item against what you own

Test each new item against what you own.

### 19. Apply the ten-outfit test

Apply the ten-outfit test.

### 20. Tailor a good piece rather than replace it

Tailor a good piece rather than replace it.

### 21. Store off-season pieces separately

Store off-season pieces separately.

## Phase 4 — Wear, Maintain and Review

### 22. Start a simple outfit log

Start a simple outfit log.

### 23. Rotate pieces to spread the wear

Rotate pieces to spread the wear.

### 24. Follow a one-in, one-out rule

Follow a one-in, one-out rule.

### 25. Care for fabrics between wears

Care for fabrics between wears.

### 26. Re-audit every six months

Re-audit every six months.

### 27. Note what never got worn

Note what never got worn.

### 28. Adjust the palette as life changes

Adjust the palette as life changes.

## Sources


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Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/How-to-Build-a-Capsule-Wardrobe. Corrections: https://www.howcompass.com