

Alicia Richmond's closet essentials

These are core pieces that should fit perfectly and look fantastic.

- An updated jean that fits low on the waist in a dark wash with a distressed color variation and straight or flare leg.
- A trouser jean in a dark uniform wash with a wide leg.
- A hip-length three-button jacket in a wool gabardine fabric or a cotton/spandex blend, in black, chocolate or gray. The jacket should be fitted through the waist.
- A white cotton/spandex button-down shirt, fitted under the arms and with curved seams in the front.
- A flat-front trouser in a gabardine fabric that fits low on the waist and is cut loose through the leg, but not baggy. The bottom should be flared, not tapered. A gabardine fabric in black, chocolate or gray.
- An A-line or pencil knee-length skirt in a gabardine in black, chocolate or gray.
- A brightly colored cotton/spandex button-down shirt, fitted though the body and with curved front seams.
- A fitted short-sleeve sweater knit top with a V-neck, that skims the body, neither too tight nor too clingy. Choose a bold color that will give basic colors a pop.
- A patterned trouser that will coordinate with the basic jacket. Choose pinstripe, plaid or tweed, depending on figure.
- A feminine A-line skirt in a small- to medium-scale print. Select a soft, draping fabric (stiff ones add bulk).
- A wrap-, empire- or shirtwaist-style dress in either a solid or medium-scale print.
- A hip-length cardigan twinset in a classic cut, with a slim fit, in a bright color that will coordinate with a patterned skirt or trouser.
- A cotton/spandex chino pant in a khaki, chocolate or camel color. Choose flat-front, in a medium weight.
- A crop pant in a gabardine, in black, chocolate or gray, to be worn with tall boots.
- A wrap-style top in either a sweater knit or matte jersey fabric with ruching on the side seams. Choose a bright color or print to be worn with neutrals.
- A slim-cut V-neck long-sleeve cotton sweater. This may be worn over the top of a fitted button-down shirt.
- A pair of knee-length chocolate or black boots.
- A pump in black or chocolate.
- A wedge heel in a neutral color that can be worn with casual clothing.
- A fashion shoe in either a pump or a wedge style. Choose a fun color, pattern or metallic. This will "pop" any outfit.



SYNNE GRIFFIN/The Salt Lake Tribune

Wardrobe consultant Alicia Richmond, left, holds up one of client Debbi Evans' jackets as part of a closet inventory. Richmond urges clients to look more closely at clothing they already have, and consider wearing them in different, sometimes surprising, combinations.

Consultants fashion a new look

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and assess each item. They each have little tricks that quickly determine whether an item fits correctly. Hughes advocates "pinching an inch" on pants: While wearing the pants, grab the side seam near the hips. If you can pinch more than half an inch of fabric in the front and a half-inch in the back, the pants are

probably too large. Richmond grabs beneath a buttock; if she gets a handful, they're too big.

Same with jackets. Put one on and squeeze at the armpit. If you can grab a generous fist of fabric, it's too big. The seam between shoulder and sleeve should hit right at the end of the shoulder.

"Size and fit is everything," said Richmond.

Once a winner is found, it's documented. Richmond's clients can photograph the outfit themselves to save money, or she'll do it for them. Hughes takes pictures and then puts them on a server at work so she can refer to a client's wardrobe at any time.

Both women then will

draw up a shopping list of items that will round out the wardrobe a woman — or in some cases, a male client — already has. The items don't have to be purchased immediately. In fact, Richmond will e-mail clients occasionally to say there's a cute boot at Kohl's or great pants on sale at Nordstrom.

In the end, a client has a photo album filled with outfits and a shopping list to make even more.

"I can't tell you how many times I went to my closet and thought, 'Oh, I have nothing to wear.' Then I'll look at the book," said Debbi Evans, who has hired Richmond to do two closet inventories. Each time, Richmond found outfits that Evans wouldn't have dreamed of.

"Never. Not one time. But when you put it on, it's just darling," said the Cottonwood Heights woman.

She believes it's money well spent. Richmond and Hughes say using their services is a smart investment.

"I teach them how to use fabrics and different styles to bring their bodies back without using cosmetic surgery," said Hughes. "It's not just a one-time, here's-your-shopping-list experience. They get training. They know where to shop to get the best deals. They learn how to maximize what they have. They get the figure profile" so that they know how to make smart purchases that will flatter their bodies, said Hughes.

Richmond tries to teach women that they don't have to spend a lot of money to look great.

Evans said Richmond's help gave her something money usually can't buy: "It gives you so much confidence to pull things together and know that it looks great."