

## How to dress like a French woman

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Editor's note: The National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals has designated January as Get Organized (GO) Month. The month-long event is dedicated to raising public awareness of the benefits of getting organized by hiring a professional organizer.

What is it about a French woman that makes the rest of us wonder: how do they do it? In my opinion, the French have an unspoken and unsurpassable sense of style, which comes from the inherent understanding that less really is more.

Think about it: what could be more elegant than a skinny black skirt paired with a crisp white blouse, a string of pearls, a classic silk scarf, a good pair of shoes and a good handbag?

To dress like a French woman is to think like a French woman, understanding that quality, not quantity, makes the woman.

To dress like a French woman takes discipline. When addressing my own clothing and accessories, I aim for quality items — stylish and hip but, at the same time, not overly trendy — which, with proper care, will last a long time.

To dress like a French woman is to know when to edit and cull your wardrobe. The easiest way to do this is to follow my “too rule”: if something is too big, too small, too tight, too loose, too long, too short, too trendy, too dated, too scuffed or too stained, it's time to say adieu.

And, just like a French woman, I'd rather own one good handbag than 20 “bargain” bags.

To dress like a French woman and start your New Year off on the right path, I wanted to share with you pictures of my own closet, as well as some invaluable hints:

**Hangers:** In my opinion, the No. 1 way to keep your closets organized and your wardrobe fresh and up to date is to purchase just enough matching hangers for those items remaining in your closet after the BIG purge (yes, you really do have to purge). Going forward, when you run out of hangers, you'll know it's time to cull your closets — not buy more hangers. And, by the way, hanging two or more items on one hanger is not the solution.

**Skirts and pants:** I use space-saving “cascading” hangers to keep similar items together. Be sure not to buy the ones that are welded together, as they are heavy and cumbersome, but do buy the single cascading skirt/pant hangers. These hangers have small hooks that



COURTESY PHOTOS

In lieu of having a valet rod installed in my closet, this cute little pink monkey hook is the perfect solution. Each night, before going to bed, I lay out the next day's outfit. With one less thing to think about in the morning, I can stay on task and be out the door in no time flat.



I'm a shoe cubby kind of girl, choosing to put one shoe — not one pair — inside each space. When I run out of spaces, I know it's time to part with a pair of shoes.

make it easy to match a top with a bottom when planning the next day's outfits.

**Sweaters and jeans:** When it comes to blue jeans, if they don't fit “just right,” they're out. Folding works best for me, as I can easily fold back the waist to see which pair I'm looking for. I also prefer folding my sweaters vs. hanging them. Try to avoid making the stacks too high, as you and I both know you'll never wear the sweater at the bottom of the pile.

**Scarves:** To roll, fold, or hang ... that is the question. Because I don't have an overabundance of scarves (or, for that matter, an overabundance of anything in my closet), I have room enough to roll my scarves. The resulting assortment of colorful, jellyroll-like scarves is functional, as well as aesthetically pleasing.

**Shoes:** Think about where your shoes have walked (i.e., the floors of public toilets), and you will never stack them, one on top of the other, ever again. That being said, I'm a shoe cubby kind of girl,



Professional organizer Marla Ottenstein stands in the middle of her carefully curated and neatly organized closet.

choosing to put one shoe — not one pair — inside each space. When I run out of spaces, I know it's time to part with a pair of shoes.

**Top shelf:** Also known as “closet purgatory.” Try to keep the top shelf totally clutter-free. In most homes, the things you toss up onto the top shelf will stay there for eternity, doing nothing more than collecting dust. Leaving the top shelf clear will open up your closet, making it feel lighter, brighter and also more spacious. ■

Naples' premier professional organizer Marla Ottenstein offers expert organizing, decluttering, downsizing and moving, packing/unpacking and time management services for residential and corporate clients. Licensed & insured. Member: National Association of Professional Organizers. For more information, visit [www.ProfessionalOrganizerFlorida.com](http://www.ProfessionalOrganizerFlorida.com) or call: 239-597-6277



Your clothes need room to breathe. It's easy to do by placing your fingers in between the hangers and giving them a little “jiggle” to create the one-inch space.