

## What's the Secret behind a Great Outfit?

What makes an outfit great? I bet you can recognize one when you see it, but can you say why it's great?

When I deconstruct a great outfit, one element is always present. It may not be responsible for the whole story, but every great outfit has this element. It deals with unification. Every great outfit must give you the sense that the parts relate to each other some way. It must be united.

I call this factor the integration factor. **Now here's the key -- not only must the parts of the outfit be tied together, but they must also relate to the person who is wearing it.** The garments, accessories, and the person must be integrated with one another.



In the photo to the left, you see Susan in all black. To my eye, the outfit is okay, but not a 10. The color relates to her brows, and the neckline is a good one for her, but with a few additions, the outfit could rise to greatness by being brought into harmony with more of Susan's features.

With the addition of the silver/gray jacket, Susan takes the outfit to a new level. Now it's in greater harmony with both her silver/gray hair and her dark brows. This outfit does a better job of uniting its elements with Susan herself. As a result she looks more interesting.

The silver jacket calls attention to one of her great assets, her hair. By wearing this color, she invites us to notice it and enjoy it.



But as I view the outfit at this point, I would say that the march to greatness isn't yet complete. One more integrating factor is needed. Notice how the outfit is somewhat divided between its upper and lower aspects. Nothing ties them together. The top half incorporates the silver and the lower half remains dark.

Wouldn't it better if the top and bottom could be brought together some way? The silver sandals do it in the photo to the right. They take the outfit to a 10, **because all the elements of the outfit are united both with one another and with the wearer.**

This is an example of how color can be used as a vehicle to tie the elements together. Other strategies such as textural elements and design lines can be used too, but in Susan's case, color is a very effective means of integration.

**Next time you put an outfit together for yourself, ask, "Are the elements integrated with me and with one another?" If not, add a unifying piece of jewelry, an accent, or a garment.**



Since you took the time to integrate your outfit's external appearance, **you can also enjoy an internal benefit by choosing to see your action as an intention to bring harmony into your whole day.** Try it and see what happens!

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## About the Author

Nicole Mertes, AICI, CIP, Founder and Director of the Women's Image Institute, provides transformational training and services to help women glow. She is one of fewer than 100 Certified Image Professionals recognized worldwide by the Association of Image Consultants International. She received their highest member award, the Award of Excellence, in 2006. She offers information, advice, and transformation through her workshops, articles, products, booklets, newsletters, and web site: [www.womensimageinstitute.com](http://www.womensimageinstitute.com)