

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING (TO KEEP YOU WARM).



...When I was a teenager, my mum used to shout at me as I tried to sneak out the front door – what are you wearing?! Possibly with good cause, it was the early 80s, era of post punk, and I was probably draped in black netting and a can of hairspray holding up my spikey hair, puncturing the ozone layer all on its own and eye make that would terrify Alice Cooper.

40 years later, a reformed goth (on the outside) and academic researcher, I am now asking the same question – What are you wearing? Have you ever put your winter jumper on but felt that you are still cold? You go and put another layer on, and you feel heavy with the burden of layers, and you don't feel any warmer. Then you start to feel uncomfortable, maybe a little bit sweaty but still not very warm. Sometimes we take for granted that because we picked up and bought a jumper, in the "jumper section" that it was designed to keep us warm. Unfortunately, a lot of the time, it is designed to make us think that it will keep us warm, because it feels soft to the touch.

Clothes shopping online or instore can seem overwhelming if we don't know what we're looking for. The countless choices of styles, colours and fibres can be confusing. Some helpful suggestions are presented below, to help shoppers navigate their winter wardrobe shop.

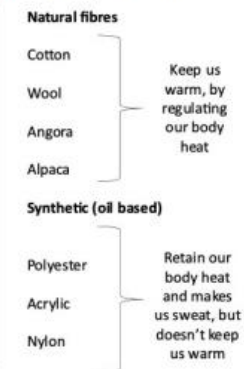


Check the label

A new item of clothing is required to have a label in the inside with helpful information that explains:

1. What it's made from (fibre content)
2. How to look after it (washing instructions)
3. Where it was manufactured (country of origin)

Natural fibres such as wool and cotton are the healthiest fibres worn next to the skin, whereas synthetic fibres such as polyester and nylon, restrict the natural breathability of our skin and make us sweat. Synthetic fibres do have other positive uses, such as waterproof clothing, and gym wear but natural fibres are always the best to keep us warm.



In the example below, the cardigan is made from wool and synthetic fibres knitted together. This is a cheaper way of manufacturing clothing that will have some heat properties, but will not perform as well as a 100% wool jumper



Layer up with light wool accessories

Wool jumpers can be more expensive, whereas a small collection of wool accessories can cost less and still add some warmth without heavy layering. Whilst we're still transitioning from working at home to stepping back into the office environment, a light wool scarf wrapped snugly around the neck, provides some protection from draughty areas particularly if sitting for long periods of time. A pair of fingerless gloves will heat up cold fingers until they get going on the keyboard or operating machinery. Wearing colourful, striped, or patterned knitwear when indoors, can make the idea of wearing layers seem less of an essential and more of a style statement.

Buy natural fibre clothing from your local charity shop or resale platforms

If you have the time, charity retail shopping can be very fruitful. The same rules apply to checking the labels and condition of an item of clothing to make sure it does contain natural fibres. Look out for sellers on digital resale platforms such as eBay and DePop, good sellers give clear, thorough descriptions of what an item of clothing is made from.

End of season sales

Sometimes we're tempted by a bargain, but a bargain is only that, if we can get real benefit from it. As the winter retail season comes to an end, shops heavily discount clothing, up to 70-80% off in some cases. Getting into the habit of buying essential clothing off season, means you have access to higher quality clothing items for the next winter. Always check the labels before a purchase.