

Why Quality Clothing Matters More than You Think

As clothing continues to get cheaper, here's my argument for spending extra for quality.



In my sophomore year of college, I bought a \$25 red crossbody bag from Forever 21 and cherished it. It was a solid staple in my wardrobe for three months -- that is, until I was walking to my Statistics class and the handle's clasp broke. This devastated me. I frantically tried to reconnect the pieces but it was to no avail. (R.I.P, LRCBB -- Little Red Cross Body Bag.) I stuffed the purse into my backpack and continued with my sad, frustrated march to Stats.

You would think this event would have been **some kind of life lesson** for me, but... nope.

I kept reliving the crossbody bag incident over and over again. My cheap jeans would develop holes in the crotch after a few months, but I just brushed it off. "Oh, it must just be my thighs and how they rub together." A beautiful floral sweater started to pill after a few washes. "I must have washed it wrong."

Finally, I got the message when an outfit I bought for a networking event fell apart while (emphasis on “while”) I was wearing it for the first time.

It was official, I was totally over the fast fashion industry!

Suspicion festered as I passed store windows at the mall. **Was all clothing doomed to a short lifespan?** As an avid problem solver, I turned to Google for answers. (What? Did you think I went to a fashion merchandising school? I studied web development and telecommunications!)



[Flickr](#)

After much research, the answer to my clothing woes was fast-fashion. **Fast-Fashion is plagued with all sorts of problems with ethics and quality.** If you want to learn more about what is ethically wrong with fast fashion, check out Sarah’s post, [“What is Ethical Fashion, Anyway? A Crash Course for College Girls”](#). Although ethics within the fashion industry is important to consider, quality is our focus in this article.

Why does the quality of our clothes...excuse my language...suck? Well, to be blunt, we're getting what we're paying for! If your jeans are \$15 and your blouse is \$8, chances are that quality is missing from the equation. Think about the supply chain for a moment. The cotton, rayon, or

whatever material your garment has, has to be grown or produced somewhere, let's say in India, and then it is shipped to China to be dyed. The dyed fabrics are shipped to Thailand for seamstresses to create the jeans that you hold in your hands today.

So with all the work and shipping that is involved in that single garment, why is it only \$25? The answer is that the fast fashion industry is cutting corners! This may be done by using materials that are low-grade or chemically made and (or) forcing impossible quotas on seamstresses to produce clothes at the speed of light (which leads to shoddy quality, by necessity).

If this alone doesn't dissuade you from buying those cheap jeans, here is a list of reasons you should consider spending more in exchange for quality.

Quality Saves You Money in the Long Run

Think of your clothes as an investment. You have to provide a heavy up-front cost for a decent item but over a long course of time, that item will inevitably save you money.

You've probably heard of the “**Cost per Wear**” formula ([we've talked about cost per wear on CF before](#)), but if you haven't, here's a quick example:

cost per wear = Total cost of the item / number of times you'll wear it

Let's say you purchase a \$25 pair of jeans that you wore for a total of 150 days until they developed holes and became unwearable. These jeans cost you (rounding up) seventeen cents a wear.

Now, let's say you invest \$100 in a pair of jeans and wear them for 150 days a year over the next five years before they too become unsuitable for wear. These jeans ended up being comparably cheaper at (still rounding up) fourteen cents a wear. They also will look better than the \$25 jeans and will save you the time

shopping for a new pair. In this case, you saved money buying something nicer.

Some Clothing Brands offer a Warranty or Lifetime Guarantee

On almost any item that costs more than \$50, I check to see if there is a warranty on the product and then stash the receipt. After my Forever 21 crossbody bag failed to stand the test of time, I ended up using my Christmas money for a similar looking bag from Fossil. Fossil has a one-year manufacturer's warranty that covers any faulty workmanship. Luckily, I've never had to use the warranty and have used the bag as my default purse for the past two years and counting.

Other brands such as The North Face and Patagonia offer lifetime warranties on their clothing! Let's hope other brands follow their lead in squashing buyer's remorse.

You Become More Mindful of Your Purchases

Before I started acquiring quality pieces for my wardrobe, I would go to the mall and impulsively buy items that provided me little value. Did I really need every color of a basic tee just because they were only \$3 a piece? (Answer: No. And those tees often fell apart after three washes.)

Before shopping, take inventory of your closet. Create a list of items that would make your closet feel complete (see [our lists of closet must-haves for your style here](#)). Make each shopping trip a personal mission to find one or two quality items from your list. When you dedicate your focus to finding your perfect bracelet, jeans, or blazer, you will begin to properly question yourself:

- Does this item fit me well?
- How long will this item actually last?
- Will this item go out of style anytime soon?

- Can I pair this item with many other things in my closet?
Once you're fully satisfied with a piece, it will not matter if the item is a higher price since it will have more value compared to its cheaper alternatives.

Walking Around in Quality Clothing Makes You Feel More Confident

When I think about that red crossbody bag that broke on my way to Statistics or the loose plaid blouse that developed a hole at my college's networking mixer, my experiences of those events were negatively affected. There are few variables that you have control of in life but making wise purchases is one.

When you know your clothes are made well and that they're comfortable and fit your style, you will instantly gain more confidence. It's not a psychologist's secret that when you dress well it affects your mood in a positive manner.

Resale-Ability

Our style evolves or our size fluctuates and sometimes an item we thought we would be wearing for years to come no longer works for us.

With apps like [Poshmark](#), [eBay](#), and [Depop](#), the process of selling your clothing is simple. The fact is, **quality brands have a better resale value** than fast-fashion merchandise. A dress from Free People will sell faster and for more money than a dress from H&M (that is, if your H&M dress even lasts that long).

But I Can't Afford Quality Clothing...

Hear me out before you say this isn't doable. I'm not saying that you need to buy a whole closet full of designer clothes at this moment. Even designer clothes can have their faults and not everything is worth splurging on. You

definitely shouldn't get rid of clothes you already feel comfortable in and enjoy wearing.

HOWEVER, I am urging you to change your approach to shopping.

Buying quality clothes takes time, especially on a college budget. No doubt about it. It can still be done, though!

For one thing, resale sites and consignment and thrift stores offer quality clothes for cheaper as opposed to department stores. If an item is of high quality, getting it secondhand still means you're getting it with years of life still on it.

Also, get creative... make a savings jar, sell clothes you no longer wear, ask for money on the holidays rather than gifts. Save up the money for something amazing rather than blowing each paycheck on a couple of cheap things.

Finally, change the way you shop. Resist the urge to impulse buy a new cheap outfit every weekend and really think like a fashionista, buying clothes you'll love for years to come.

I promise you, it's always better to buy a couple of quality pieces than many low-quality ones.

But How Do I Know if An Item is High-Quality?

If you're not comfortable with your ability to assess whether a garment is well-made, stay tuned for next week's post: **"College Fashion's 9 Simple Tips For Spotting Quality Clothing"**! There, I'll show you how to find high-quality items, even at thrift stores and resale sites.

What is Your Opinion?

We covered a lot of topics in this post about fast-fashion, the value of purchases, and clothing quality, but we want to know what are your thoughts about them? Leave a comment below to open up a discussion!