



Christina Proctor searches locally for unique pieces, such as this 1960s lace gown discovered at Auburn Vintage Clothiers in Conestogo.

PHOTOGRAPHY • DECLAN OUTHIT

Embracing your unique style



Lynn Haddrall

Christina Proctor uses style to help her clients gain confidence and achieve their goals. She loves seeing people embrace their own unique appearance.

There's a difference between style coaching and image consulting, says Proctor, owner of a wardrobe styling company called Wear Out There.

"I am much more concerned with helping individuals love how they feel about themselves," she explains. "It can be a more intensive process than simply picking out nice clothes. It's fun and empowering for clients; they learn a lot about themselves and how to express themselves."

Proctor is interested in gender psychology and women's studies. She has a psychology

degree from Wilfrid Laurier University, a post-graduate certificate from Conestoga College and is certified as a style coach after graduating from the Style Coaching Institute, based in England.

"I truly believe that how we think about ourselves has a huge impact on our actions and behaviours. Style can be used to help us achieve our goals and live the life we have always wanted."

Proctor focuses on finding local clothes

and accessories for her clients. She knows which stores offer the best choices for different styles and keeps her fashion radar tuned for new spots.

"I make it my personal mission to go out and see where the different stores are so I can refer my clients there," says Proctor.

Her company, which she launched last year, grew out of a blog she started in 2013.

"I was passionate about storytelling and sharing the stories behind local fashion retailers. I am really passionate about helping people with their style. I wanted to make it easier and accessible, to teach people where to go in their own community and really promote that."

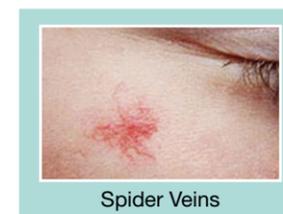
Her blog and company name came easily.



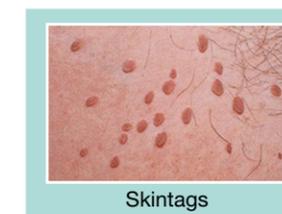
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She loved watching the popular television show called “What Not to Wear.” There was also a book called “Who What Wear.”

“I wanted my blog to be about where to shop here. I wanted it to be about a search for personal style in our own community.”

Her logo is clean and simple, designed around a hangar image. She does her own marketing and has unique items, such as a small tape measure that fits easily in a purse.

Proctor also works at Strong Start, a registered Canadian charity that helps young children to read. She has been part of that organization since 2013 and takes care of marketing and fundraising.

“I really enjoy that, but this is my passion,” Proctor says when we meet at Auburn Vintage Clothiers in Conestogo, a local store where she finds hidden treasures for her clients. She sorts through racks of vintage clothes and pulls items she thinks could easily be modernized.

Proctor’s personal style has evolved. She smiles, recalling how label-focused she was as a girl growing up in Elmira and trying to fit in.

“At that time, you’re trying on different identities and figuring out where it is you want to go. The biggest change for me was going from university age into a working environment and having to really up your style and get those pieces on a budget,” she says. “It was important to learn where to shop smartly and how to shop for your shape. Now I’ve developed a stronger appreciation for better-quality pieces and I like to express myself.”

Proctor shares that expertise with clients seeking to develop their own style. An initial consultation lasts a couple hours. There’s a questionnaire to assess clients’ feelings about their bodies: what they like, what they want to emphasize or play down. Some customers want a “high-level” image makeover; others hope to improve their confidence and learn how to express their personal style.

“Body image is important when you’re developing a personal style. From there, we

identify their likes and goals and what they need. We do some colour analysis. I take their measurements and we figure out their body shape and what styles really suit that body shape and then I identify their style personality.”

Proctor says people generally fall into five style personalities – creative, dramatic, natural, romantic and classic. She describes herself as a romantic but likes to add flair by mixing in edgier pieces.

“I enjoy the femininity. I like the florals and that sort of thing and I enjoy having fun with that. Just a little bit. It makes it a little more relaxed and less stuffy and I think that’s me as well. That’s what I think style is all about. It’s just really incorporating your personality and showing it on the outside.”

On the day we meet, Proctor is wearing a weathered brown leather jacket purchased in Florence, Italy. She loves leather jackets. She’s mixed it with a classic button-down white blouse and a vintage lace skirt purchased at Auburn Vintage. She shortened the skirt to better match her proportions.

“It’s important to get things tailored to fit you and don’t be afraid of that because that’s when you really get pieces that look like they were made for you.”

You need to be committed and open to new ideas to transform your style. Start by reviewing what’s already in the closet.

“They say that women wear maybe 20 per cent of their wardrobe on a regular basis. I teach people where they actually need to purchase items to make their wardrobe work more effectively for them.”

Proctor is inspired by runway fashions. It’s a challenge to demystify style for everyday women and men who tend to dismiss high-fashion layouts as unattainable.

“I did some modeling when I was younger. I find that sometimes people get really overwhelmed with what they see in the magazines. How does that actually work on my figure? You use that as inspiration and then you make it your own.”

Heading into autumn, Proctor is focused on transition looks for her clients. Temperatures at this time of year can be a fashion challenge.

“I think one of the main things is always layering. You can have fun too in those early couple months of fall with tights. Really fun bright colours. And scarves. I wear scarves all year. You can thicken the material a little bit as well. It’s mostly the layering, the tights and the long over lean.”

Proctor wants her clients to have fun with fashion while creating their own style. There’s a simple principle at the heart of her advice: enhance your unique figure and find pieces that make you feel good when you wear them.

“Once you know where you fall, embrace it. Dress for yourself and no one else. Your body is a canvas. You can enhance it and do whatever you want. That’s what I like to pass on to others.”

WHICH STYLE PERSONALITY ARE YOU?

Christina Proctor offers style advice on her blog at wearouthere.wordpress.com. Here’s an edited excerpt about the five style personalities:

Creative: This style values uniqueness and trendsetting. Interested in runway looks but with a twist, you combine colours, textures and themes into your outfits. You may find unusual silhouettes in your closet, with garments from different decades. Fabrics are glittered or shined, with exotic or geometric prints. With this style, you aim to stand out because dressing is considered an art form. Jewelry is bold, costumed and eye-catching. Your hairstyle is often long and curled, or short and dramatic, combined with an experimental and ever-changing makeup routine. Your style is best described as eclectic, unpredictable and one-of-a-kind.

Dramatic: This style makes an entrance with garments that have that “wow” factor. You prioritize looking good over practicality, preferring to over-dress rather than under-dress. Your closet is full of impulse buys, in dramatic colours and animal prints. Accessories are daring, to make an impression. Playing with different looks and reinventing yourself is fun. Perfectly coiffed hair is matched with a red lip, smoky eye, and luscious lashes. Your style is best described as glamorous, feminine and bold.

Natural: This casual style is comfort-based. You may find your workwear and playwear overlap, with garments in your closet made primarily in denim, stretch knits, khaki and



tweed. Jewelry is often in earth tones and natural materials such as wood, shells and stones. When possible, loose-fitting clothes are chosen to avoid limiting movement. Makeup and hairstyling is minimal as you are bored by lengthy beauty routines. Flat shoes and boots are preferred, choosing a kitten heel over a stiletto for fancier occasions. Your style is best described as easy, relaxed and no-fuss.

Romantic: This style is feminine, luxurious and all about details such as ruffles, bows and frills. You may find floral, pastel and detailed pieces in your closet made of cashmere, silk, lace or tulle. Delicate and dainty jewelry is preferred, from simple to elaborate pieces. Makeup is subtle with an emphasis on the eyes. For footwear, the choice is often kitten heels, peep-toe pumps, ballerina flats or Mary-Janes. Your style is best described as girlie, figure-enhancing and delicate.

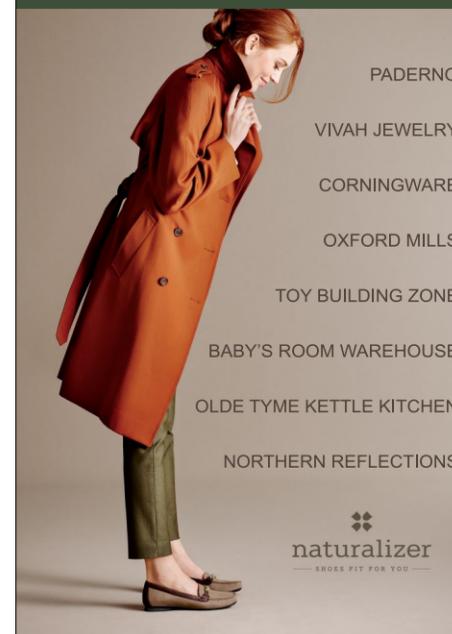
Classic: This style is traditional, elegant and timeless, with items in tailored cuts. You may find structured suits, jackets, pencil skirts and trousers in your closet, in classic colours such as black, cream, brown and beige. Fabrics such as light wools, fine cotton, and silks make up most of your wardrobe and are easily mixed and matched. Accessories are made of traditional materials such as gold, silver, and pearls, with simple designs. You choose a timeless hairstyle, accompanied by a safe, predictable makeup routine. Quality is valued over quantity. Your style is best described as understated, refined and sophisticated.

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