

School Clothes on a Budget

By Sherry Kyle

While we model how to have an inner makeover by being compassionate, kind, and gentle, among the other godly principles, we can also show our kids how to look their best by purchasing clothes that don't break the bank. Consider these tips when shopping.

1. **Go through closets and drawers and find out what fits. Make a list of what your child needs.** Bag the gently used clothes for Goodwill, and bring the list with you when you shop. If you're like me, and have a number of children, it's a good way to keep track of who needs what before you purchase too much.
2. **Decide on your budget before you go shopping.** Talk with your child about how much money you have to spend and stick to it. If your child is old enough to carry a wallet and hand the money to the cashier, let them. They'll learn the value of the dollar, how far it will go, and when it's time to go home.
3. **Don't wait till the week before school starts!** Avoid the crowds and the high prices by purchasing clothes a month before school starts to get the deals on the summer clearance or wait until October when the fall items go on sale. Another wallet friendly idea is to buy the clothes when your child needs something instead of paying all at once. Remember, there are school pictures, sports uniforms, among other things you'll need to pay for once school starts.
4. **Go to Goodwill or your local thrift store for bargains.** Re-sale or consignment shops are a good choice, too. Go online and sign up for e-mails to receive coupons, and look for stores that have designer brands at affordable prices such as Ross or Marshalls.
5. **Graciously accept hand-me-downs.** Since going green is so important for our planet, why not recycle clothes, too? A fun idea is to have a clothes swap party. This is especially helpful if your child goes to school that requires a uniform. My daughter and her friends love to have sleepovers and give each other their clothes when they've outgrown them.
6. **See a sale? Buy in multiples.** If your child finds a pair of jeans that fit, buy two or three pair in varying shades. Come across a T-shirt your child loves? Purchase several in different colors. You'll cut your shopping time and have outfits that will mix and match.
7. **Splurge on one item your child will wear often, such as shoes or a jacket.** Sometimes the most expensive items last longer and are worth every penny you spend, especially when you know you'll get your money's worth if your child wears it every day.
8. **Don't forget accessories.** A few well-chosen pieces of jewelry will go a long way to make your child feel like they fit in, and won't break your bank. For my teen daughter's birthday I purchased a cute rhinestone frog pin from an antique shop, two pairs of dangly earrings and fun, brightly colored bracelets. There's nothing like a little bling.

Your child's confidence will soar when they feel good about how they look—inside and out.

Sherry Kyle writes books for girls, as well as novels for women. Sherry is the recipient of a Gold Mom's Choice Award for *The Christian Girl's Guide to Style*.

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