

SHOPPING

6 Pro Tips for Wearing Vintage to Prom

No one else will be dressed like you that night. We guarantee it.

by Fawnia Soo Hoo

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Prom shopping options this year are as vast as **Kylie Jenner's** hair colors — from **punked-out looks** to a mind-blowing **plethora of dresses**. But here's an alternative you probably haven't considered yet: vintage.

"Aside from the environmental benefits, it's a distinctive way to look original," says expert Cameron Silver, Fashion Director of H by Halston and founder of Los Angeles vintage boutique **Decades**. (You might also remember him trading comedic barbs with business partner Christos Garkinos on Bravo's *Dukes of Melrose*.) "Especially with so many fast fashion options, [by wearing] vintage, you have the opportunity to pretty much guarantee that you're not going to show up in the same dress as somebody else."

But going vintage for prom can sometimes be tricky, especially if you're a retro shopping newbie. How do you look like you're headed to prom and not a cosplay convention? With so many decades of fashion to choose from, which one has the best options? Are there limits to what you can tailor on a dress? And let's not even talk about 30-year-old armpit stains (ew). Not to worry, Cameron is here with some sage advice when it comes to finding the perfect vintage look for prom.



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Something old should actually look new.

Cameron has one mantra for shopping vintage, which really applies to any event. "This will probably be on my tombstone: Does it look modern?" he says. "That's the great irony of vintage. Although you're buying something from the past, you want it to look modern and relevant today." His advice is easier than ever to follow since several contemporary trends are actually updated throwbacks. Think Alice + Olivia's '60s cool and Saint Laurent's sparkly '80s dresses.



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Explore your options.

Cameron suggests looking in thrift shops, estate sales and vintage stores like Decades in Los Angeles. And don't forget trusty eBay. Of course, with online shopping for vintage, you have to be very careful in analyzing the available details about the dress and judging the fit. Also, manage your expectations. "Chances are, you're not going to win the lottery by finding a dress for \$5 or \$10," he says.

Christian Dior Haute Couture gown,
decadesinc.com.



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A tailor is your new best friend.

“Regardless of whether or not you’re buying something pre-loved or brand new, tailoring is something you factor into event dressing,” says Cameron.

Any tailor — even your local dry cleaner — can take care of simple alterations like taking in the waistline, adding a hook-and-eye closure, replacing a zipper or shortening the hemline. Some of Cameron's clientele will have a tailor “modernize” a dress by taking off the straps, removing or shortening sleeves or changing the neckline. “You make the V or the scoop deeper,” he says. “Those things are really easy to do.”

But there are some things a tailor can't fix, like removing those yellowed, dried-out sweat stains. And you'll probably spend more on trying to mend moth nibbles or fabric tears than you did purchasing the dress in the first place. That said, be sure to take a forensic scientist-level look at a piece before buying.



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All the eras.

From *Grease*-esque '50s dance frocks to '80s cocktail dresses, there are so many fun pieces and time periods to choose from. While the right era for you is completely subjective, Cameron has a couple favorites. "I like a lot of those quintessential '50s dresses for prom. It's almost like a debutante moment," he says. "I also love the '80s dresses. It looks real high fashion. Fashion started to become more massively produced [in the '80s] and it became even more accessible to get a designer look for less money. So you have these '80s knockoffs that are probably very inexpensive to find and they're so cute [for prom]."

Ungaro crushed velvet floral dress,
decadesinc.com.



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Stick with contemporary accessories.

"I always say, 'if your garment is vintage, your accessories are modern,'" Silver advises. "It's important to balance it out. I don't think you're trying to recreate the way your grandparents went to the prom."

Instead, he suggests a cool clutch and/or edgy statement jewelry. "Forever 21 has great costume jewelry," Silver says. "So you create an editorial look."

Forever 21 layered rhinestone statement necklace, forever21.com.



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If you're not ready for the full vintage plunge, dabble.

You can always just "accessorize with vintage," Silver says. Choose a contemporary look and accent with a vintage clutch (the '80s have some fabulous ones) or throwback costume jewelry. That's another way to find unique pieces without spending a fortune. "I think that's so great to embrace your individuality," Silver says. "In a world where everyone just wants to fit in, this is your moment when you can stand out."

Alexander McQueen studded clutch, decadesinc.com.