

PULL IT TOGETHER!

THE DIFFERENCE IS IN THE DETAILS.

BY HANS GSCHLISSER

Grow up," my fashionable friend sneered over his ceviche, with one eyebrow raised. "You look disheveled, kind of a mess..."

"What are you talking about?" I demanded, feeling very sartorially appropriate in trim khakis and a crisp blue oxford shirt.

"Your outfit!" he dispatched with disdain. "It's dull and uncoordinated. It makes you look dated. And clueless!" Requesting specifics about my fashion transgressions, I was told that, for one thing, my belt and shoes had nothing in common.

"The belt's at my waist, the shoes are on my feet: what do they need in common?" I wondered aloud.

But after a quick self-assessment, I had to admit that my friend was right. Despite owning plenty of quality clothes, some with designer labels, I never seemed to look quite right. Clearly, my image was far less cool and far more boring than most of the guys in that trendy restaurant.

Time to consult the experts. Here's what I learned:

- When it comes to accessories, buy the best you can afford. When the accessories look expensive, the outfit looks expensive.

- The belt and shoes should be as close as possible in color, texture and material.

- Socks should match the trouser, rather than the shoe. (But a little whimsy on the feet is acceptable, as is going sans socks in summer.)

- More than anything else you wear, your tie expresses your personality. Make sure it's current (three and a half inches, narrower if you're a rock star) and make sure it's interesting. Even casual outfits, including jeans, go up a notch with the right neckwear: try a knit or linen tie, or a subtle conversational.

- Keep your eyewear current. Bring along a friend when you select new glasses and make sure the frames complement your face shape and features. (Bold frames are of the moment, but only if they look good on you!)

- A handkerchief in your sportcoat pocket adds a touch of elegance.

So there it is. Without threatening my masculinity, the simple act of coordinating a suede belt with my suede bucks has instilled newfound confidence. And now that I'm taking a few minutes each morning to accessorize, my life is changing for the better. My girlfriend seems happy to see me. My colleagues are showing respect. Who knew life could be so simple? My patronizing friend even picked up the check at our most recent lunch outing.

