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What to Wear (& NOT to Wear) to the Ball Field this Spring: Style Tips for Moms

As moms, we welcome Spring's warmer temperatures that allow children to play outside, but often stress about what to wear during the sports season that comes with it.

One of the biggest complaints of many of my clients who are mothers is that when they took on the rigors of managing a family, out went any sense of personal style. I tell these women that while their lifestyle may not require the wardrobe of a supermodel, there is no reason they can't feel attractive and stylish even when chasing kids and grocery shopping. Just as she endeavors to please the members of her family, a mother deserves to feel pleased about her own appearance.

There is a fine line when it comes to proper dressing for such occasions. Moms want to look suitably casual, but not sloppy. Perhaps a bit dressier than athletic wear, but not so glitzy that one appears to be "trying too hard." Being age-appropriate is also a concern: be too trendy and risk looking like you are trying to emulate a teenager, but god forbid falling too far on the other side of the spectrum and being labeled "frumpy" or "matronly."

So what to do? I recommend that instead of focusing on trendy fashion, focus on the fit of basic pieces that work for your life. Often, it isn't the style of clothing that someone wears that makes them look frumpy, it is the fit that does. Take, for example, a pair of capri pants and a T-shirt, which is a staple summer outfit for many moms. They call them "mom jeans" for a reason, you know, so be careful about how frumpy your pants are

fitting. I am not implying that your pants should be so fashion forward that your teenage daughter will want to wear them, but there is a broad spectrum between pants your kids will wear and pants that are just plain dowdy.

Start by investing in some basic casual pieces. Look for items that are easy to care for and comfortable, but well-fitting. The tendency is to buy casual clothes solely for comfort and not for flattery, thus too large or baggy. When it comes to fit, casual clothes should be held the same standards as dressier clothes. Just as you do for those dressier clothes, think about building wardrobes. For example, choose cohesive pieces built around basic styles and colors for the best mix-and-match wardrobe.

Here are a few tips to help you find your own casual style without falling prey to the “soccer mom uniform.”

Tees



A great tee shirt, one that fits correctly (in no way baggy but not skin tight either), is a weekend staple. For best fit, look for tees with at least some lycra/spandex content, as this will help the tee hold its shape. When you try tees on, be certain that the shoulder seams hit AT your shoulder (not half way down your arm), that the hem is long enough to cover your waistband when you sit down or cheer for that scored goal/base

hit, and that the body doesn't tent out around you but rather gently hugs your torso. Crew necks are always easy, but look also for tees with a scoop or V neck or (good for those with larger chests), boat neck (can balance wider hips) and square neck

ABOVE: Three Dot Scoop neck \$44

(elongates a short neck). With a few exceptions, polo-style shirts are generally dated for women and should be left to dads. And when in doubt of whether a neckline is too low, layer a fitted tank underneath!

RIGHT: GAP Favorite V-neck, \$14.50



DONT'S:

- Team uniform (unless you are a coach and absolutely required)
- Bared (or even peeking out) midriffs
- Tees with "cute" logos, sayings, cartoons, etc.

Light-weight sweaters

A simple cardigan, hoodie or pullover sweater is easy to layer for outdoor activities; wear over a tee or tank. Cotton and cashmere can both be washed at home; both make good layering pieces for those windy spring baseball games.

As with tees, look for interesting detailing on the sweaters - three quarter sleeves, for



example, which can be worn over a long sleeved tee for a cool layered look - and cheerful colors.



LEFT: J.Crew V-neck short-sleeve cardigan, \$59.50

ABOVE RIGHT, Juicy Couture Striped Pointelle Hoodie, \$248

Simple jacket

Spring often means winds and temperatures that can veer from positively summery to quite cold in a matter of innings. Having a lightweight jacket - including one that can withstand wind and



rain and cold - is a must for sporty weekends. Choose a tailored cut; warm or weatherproof without being bulky. Some days will be merely crisp and allow for just a zippered jacket or hoodie. Avoid windsuit or overly athletic looks (leave those to the mall walkers and joggers, respectively). Instead opt for fitted jackets in fun colors and rich fabrics like velour or terry.

ABOVE: Addidas "Street Graphic" Fleece Hoodie, \$44

Yoga pants & Jeans

Yes, you read that right: busy moms need a pair of yoga pants, because inevitably, some Saturday, your son or daughter will have an 8:00AM game, and it will be all you can do to get everyone fed and dressed and out the door in time. The important thing here, though, is that you want a pair of yoga pants that FIT PROPERLY, particularly through the backside. Look for a fairly substantial fabric, because thinner fabrics will cling, and something with some stretch, too, because it will smooth out the parts of you that may not be so smooth. Pair yoga pants with a hoodie or a tee and a sweater.



ABOVE RIGHT: Old Navy Yoga Pants, \$19.50

Jeans are a no-brainer. Just make sure they are NOT the dreaded “Mom Jeans!” Avoid this by buying jeans with a darker wash, lower waist and modern fit. I am a proponent of the “premium denim” jeans, aptly named not only for the quality but also the price! Once you get over the sticker shock, in my opinion, these jeans are well worth it because of the superior fit, look and durability. Be prepared to try on a LOT of different pairs in different brands, styles and sizes. It can get kind of frustrating, so if you don’t want to hire someone like me to hold your hand throughout the process, go to a shop that has a denim specialist (Belk, Soca, Doree) who knows how different styles fit. Brands to check out include Joe’s, 7 for All Mankind, Citizens of Humanity, David Kahn and Not Your Daughter’s Jeans.

DONT’S:

- “Mom jeans”
- Jean shorts

Dresses



Many women can’t imagine wearing a dress to the ball field, but I’m not talking about ladies’ lunch frocks. I’m talking about loose, comfortable jersey knit dresses that are perfect for those hot days. Paired with cute flip-flops (I recommend a go-with-everything metallic pair), a soft, cool dress is my favorite for those sweltering Saturdays.



ABOVE RIGHT, Ecoganik Jersey Dress, \$108

ABOVE LEFT, Ophelia Cuban Rumba Dress, \$38

Cute casual shoes

Since you're probably not actually PLAYING a sport in these shoes, they need not be actual athletic shoes. Puma, Rocket Dog, Privo and Merrell are among the vendors who make great sporty slides and slip-on sneakers; wear them with jeans or yoga pants. Ballet flats, driving mocs or cute flip-flops are a nice alternative with jeans, shorts and summer dresses.

ABOVE RIGHT, J-41 "Leo," \$90

DONT'S:

-Keds

ACCESSORIES

Not much is needed in the way of jewelry with the exception of a watch and a simple pair of earrings.

As an alternative to an athletic watch, I wear a man's stainless watch - the size and style makes it appropriately casual and sporty. As for earrings, a pair of diamond studs (faux or real) is classic and simple.

DONT'S:

-Scrunchies



When it comes down to it, most important is to take the stress out of dressing for sports season so that you feel comfortable and attractive in your clothes, allowing you to focus on cheering your child to victory.

For more than 9 years, Tracy Robinson has been recognized as Birmingham's premiere Fashion Consultant and Stylist. From full-

scale runway shows, to photo shoots, to business seminars, to personal shopping and "What Not To Wear" style closet consulting sessions, Tracy's experience in the fashion industry runs the gamut. She has worked with designers such as Kay Unger, Sigrid Olsen and Alex Garfield; stores such as Parisian, Saks Fifth Avenue, Belk and Gus Meyer; and many individual clients around the Southeast. Tracy offers a fresh approach to traditional fashion consulting that caters to, among others, what she believes to be an under-served group: style conscious yet budget-savvy and time-constrained individuals. "Inasmuch as most folks may realize the importance of a look that reflects their lifestyle and individuality, these same individuals most likely don't seek assistance from a professional stylist, concerned that it would be cost-prohibitive or tedious. The perception that a professional stylist is only for the rich or celebrities is a big misconception." Tracy believes that our outward appearance is a palette on which we paint our individuality, and that we owe it to ourselves to develop a personal style that makes sense for the way we live, and most important, makes us feel good - not because it is en vogue. Tracy's goal is to help clients decipher their own style preferences and to educate them on key style principles and elements so that they can make better decisions regarding that age old question, "What to wear?"

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