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ALL THE BIG shopping malls seem to have the same fashion chains selling the same clothes.

But this doesn't mean you have to dress like everyone else. We interviewed some of Hong Kong's most fashion-forward people for tips on how to dress with an edge and separate yourself from the masses.

Fashion designer Helen Chan Hoi-lun said local teens tend to buy clothes from chain stores such as I.T. and Esprit. "It's almost like they're wearing uniforms, because they buy clothes from the same shops," she said.

"Local teens are not creative and open-minded enough when it comes to fashion. Most of them just follow Japan's fashion trends."

Finding your own style can be tricky. But image consultant Eve Roth Lindsay, of Savvy Style, said it's easy to establish your own style if you plan ahead.

"When you think about your favourite star, think about a certain look or image they have. Then start to collect pictures to follow [that style]," she said.

Next, think about what your style personality is – are you natural, sporty, trendy, glam or modern?

If you're not sure, start a fashion book and collect pictures from magazines of things you like, suggested Lindsay. Then use this as a guide to create a look that is your own.



Style: my way



BY
JOYCE SIU

But don't just copy the stars. Chan said it's important to know the strengths and weaknesses of your body shape in order to choose the right clothes. Think about the shape, length and width of your arms, legs, shoulders, hips and thighs. In general, clothes with an

irregular cut and dark shade help cover your weaknesses.

One of the easiest ways to get a new look is to use accessories, said Lindsay. Wearing the latest bag, belt, sunglasses or jewellery is a fast way to mix and match, and create your own look without spending a lot.

"You might want to be known for a certain type of fashion, wearing trendy

accessories or unusual hairstyles. The point is to get known for something. And soon that will be your own style," she said.

Don't throw away your old clothes, either. Timbee Lo Wai-him, who recently set up his own label, said you can wear summer shirts in a funky layering style during the cooler months.

For example, pair clashing patterns, such as a checked shirt over a stripy T-shirt. Or "tie a big shirt around your neck as a scarf," Lo said.

He also said avoid buying clothes just because they are pretty or on sale. "You need to think if they match what's in your wardrobe. Otherwise you'll end up buying clothes that you have nothing to match with."

If you have creative hands, try DIY which is cheap and fun. Lo suggests decorating T-shirts with old earrings or pendants, while Chan said to add words, logos and drawings to T-shirts, or badges, beads and lace to dresses or skirts. You can buy cheap materials in Nam Cheung Street, Sham Shui Po.

Top shopping tips

When you shop, don't just wander around the big shopping malls. Try exploring the little independent shops in Causeway Bay or the Rise Commercial Building in Tsim Sha Tsui, where many local fashion designers set up their own shops. Here are some shops recommended by our fashion gurus.

Moxier – custom-made T-shirts, bags and hats (Shop 174, 1/F, Causeway Place, Causeway Bay)

My Little Palace – collection of shift dresses, miniskirts, plastic headbands (Shop B4, 16A Elgin Street, Soho, Central)

Moon Creations – cute collection of bags (Shop C, G/F 34B Staunton Street, Central)

Timbee Lo – stylish designs by a local designer (Shop 81, 2/F, Red Mall, 501-515 Jaffe Road, Causeway Bay)

Desire – accessories with a European flavour, e.g. brooches and hair clips (Shop 220, 2/F, Laforet, East Point Road)

Do your own thing... Timbee Lo (left) and Helen Chan say, with a little effort, it's easy to create a unique look. Photos: K. Y. Cheng, Edward Wong