

Lifestyle & Reviews



Black has been all over catwalks this season.

Picture: PA



Strapless Tulip Dress, New Look
Price: £25

Leather Frill Clutch, Top Shop
Price: £35



Mock Cardie by Sticky Fingers, from www.basicallblack.com
Price: £95

Trousers by Hanni, from www.basicallblack.com
Price: £60



Tweed Cape Coat, Top Shop
Price: £250

Jake Multi-Strap Shoe, Top Shop
Price: £55



Fashion

ASK any woman which colour dominates all sections of her wardrobe, from casual-wear to cocktail dresses, and the answer will most likely be black.

Because it's such a classic, black tends to get ignored. But there's a revolution underway, particularly as summer's over and it's time to get serious at work. The launch this month of a website devoted entirely to black womenswear, www.basicallblack.com, is one sign that due attention is being lavished on our dearest colour at last. The website's founder, Janey Marshall, says: "Like most busy working mums, I needed a wardrobe that made it quick and easy to look smart, professional and fashionable, and more and more, I found myself turning to black."

Then there's the fact that, as a spokesperson for Harvey Nichols says, "black's all over the runways at the moment."

Yet according to Sarah Hollamby, a City image consultant whose female clients own an average of six black suits each, only 28 per cent of women actually suit black and the

rest just wear it anyway. But, as she admits, we're not going to stop wearing little black dresses, black suits or black cardies and cover-ups any time soon whether we suit it or not. The key, then, is to wear it right.

Sophia Williams, dress buyer at New Look, says: "Black should be worn with textured fabrics like watermark and jacquard pieces or liquid PVC or lace. Teaming your outfit up with gem trinkets can add extra sparkle." Enter black drop earrings, chic and chunky cocktail rings, dramatic black necklaces and patent leather shoes.

Hollamby cautions that if you've got sallow or pale skin, black can be draining. To avoid looking like a washed-out drug-addict, bring colour into the equation. Tartan scarves look smart and are everywhere just now (Top Shop does a nice one). Or wear brighter accessories around your neck.

Brighter make-up is a must, too: lipstick and more eye-shadow in peaches or pink works well. Like Williams, Hollamby believes a mix and match of fabrics is the way to keep black vibrant. "A satin top works well with a black wool skirt and perhaps a patent belt or shoe; it really adds interest to your outfit. Black on black looks terribly smart."

Looks like black's the new black. But then, women the world over could have told you that.

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BACK TO BLACK

The ultimate classic colour is finally getting the attention it deserves, says **Zoe Strimpel**