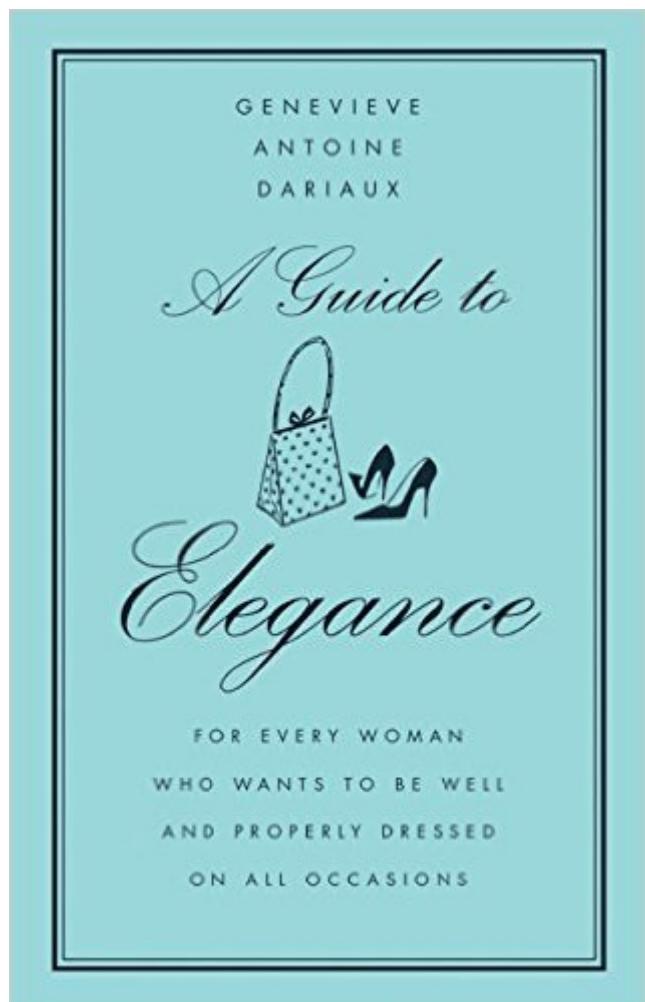


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# A Guide To Elegance: For Every Woman Who Wants To Be Well And Properly Dressed On All Occasions



## **Synopsis**

The original *What Not to Wear* from one of fashion's most enduringly stylish women ... Written by French style guru Madame Genevieve Antoine Dariaux, *Elegance* is a classic style bible for timeless chic, grace, and poise -- every tidbit of advice today's woman could possibly need, all at the tips of her (perfectly manicured) fingers. From Accessories to Zippers, Madame Dariaux imparts her pearls of wisdom on all things fashion-related -- and also offers advice on other crucial areas in life from shopping with girlfriends (don't) to marriage and sex.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I hate to admit but since I bought *Elegance* and started following its advice I look much better. People have actually stopped to comment. Although I'm cringing (what did I look like before?) it has been fun to get the compliments. Madam Dariaux was a designer, a director of Nina Ricci and a fashion writer. She arranged the book in alphabetical format with instructions and observations about everything from alligator bags to maternity wear. The editors have updated the book just a tiny bit but it does no harm. It's like having your own stylist.

Yes Yes Yes! I was given the original by my mother long, long ago. Every page was a revelation. As one's appearance speaks so emphatically about one, I can't think of any gift more useful to a young woman about to take her place in the world. However, Madame Dariaux has sage wisdom and

common sense advice for women of any age. Who knew that being elegant was really so very simple! And it's certainly not money that creates elegance. I wish that this book had been given to more women, especially those that have made careers in the entertainment industry. Ahem. In any case, I look forward to reading the updated version of "Elegance". And I, too, am delighted that the author is alive, well and thriving. She is truly one of my idols. I would give many more stars were they available.

I can't believe it, but since I've read this book, not only do I feel better about the way I look with out: 1) having any plastic surgery, 2) spending way too much money on new clothes, 3) going and buying tons of makeup to cover up flaws only I think that I have, or 4) listening to any advice from snooty fashion magazines. Believe it or not, I've even been saving money AND dressing better. The majority of Ms. Dariaux's advice is priceless. Before finishing her book, I spent way too much money on clothes, had way too many of them because I never threw anything out or gave anything away, but I never felt like I had anything to wear. After finishing her book, I went through my wardrobe and gave atleast four trash bags worth of clothing to good will, keeping only a few pieces. I never feel over or underdressed, and I haven't regretted a clothing purchase (of which I'd made very few) since. I never felt I would take anything so seemingly frivolous so seriously - but I did, and it has paid off.

This book is a rather dangerous little flower. It appears to be very sweet and innocent, but before you know it, Madame has you following her every word. This book makes What Not to Wear seem careless. Madame advises on "everything" and even though this edition has been recently revised, it still is rather rigid and old-fashioned. On the other hand, if you already posess some taste and personality, it is a wonderful source of inspiration to never let our modern times get in the way of glamour. The glamour of simplicity, that is. And as a lover of all things retro, I can definitely recommend this book as a how-to on retro dress.

One of the many great things here is the author's attitude toward women of all ages. When this book was originally published, in the early Sixties, real clothes and real elegance were the province of the woman over forty. She had money, taste, and the experience to use both to her advantage. How different from our situation, now. Currently, we expect a girl-child to wear sexy clothes at 8, charge out of the adolescent gates as a perfect little woman at 14. She'll run through her twenties, slow in her thirties, disappear off the course by forty. She has fallen by the demographic wayside. In our

era, beauty is inexorably bound to giving the impression of carrying viable eggs. Mass markets and "Made in China" labels ensure an abundance of cookie-cutter clothes, but care nothing for individual style. Imagine a time when you had no size-- when clothes were made to fit you, not the reverse. This book is from that time. A lovely, strong woman, Madame Antoine-Dariaux's voice is not just wry and intelligent-- it's subversive.

While true style never goes out of fashion, I found some of Ms. Dariaux's advice to be a bit old fashioned. As a plus size woman I prefer to wear clothing that skims my curves instead of the trapeze styles that she suggests. Why should I hide my curves beneath a burlap sack? I shudder to think what she would think of me, a single woman of 42, who decided to buy her own diamonds and other precious stones instead of waiting for her only piece of real jewellery to arrive in the form of an engagement ring. And as an African American woman, well, her suggestion that dark lipsticks are out of style--hmmm, let's just say that my dark skin just isn't going to carry off the light pinks and mauves that she insists we wear. At any rate, she's made some good points, but not all of them are going to apply universally to every woman who picks up her book.

Some people may find this book restrictive, constrained and out of date. I find it liberating and useful in 2006. This book is about the principles behind an elegant practical wardrobe. OK, skip the comments on veils hats and gloves, the rest still applies. What this book does not provide is advice on how to choose a t-shirt, jeans or underwear. Check the lucky shopper's guide for that. The author gives invaluable advice on, for example the use (and abuse) of the colour black--which should NEVER be teamed with brights or pastels-. Trinny and Susanna would applaud!. Black worn in the mornings is cheap, unflattering, aggressive and somewhat ghetto-ish. Only people who are lazy or clueless about colour wear black head to toe in the morning. Do not confuse black with other dark colours. Mme Dariaux does not write for the  $\mathcal{A}@\text{lite}$ . She proposes very limited wardrobes which are adapted to the season and the situation. I know nobody who would own so few clothes as she proposes! On the contrary, sloppy dressers usually have a huge wardrobe of cheap t-shirts and sweatshirts, and an ironing basket which never empties. I transcribe her comments on wedge heel shoes (notice it is the latest resuscitated trend, for summer 2006): "Nothing is more certain to give you an awkward gait and a heavy leg than a high wedgie". Her remark still applies. If you admired the style of the late Carolyn Besette, this book is for you. If your fashion icon is Victoria Beckam, then do not buy it.

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