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C O U T U R I O U S

The Canadian Capsule Planner

Feel confident in any weather, in any situation

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Introduction

Welcome to my capsule wardrobe planner! I've been obsessed with capsule wardrobes, wardrobe planning, uniform dressing, minimalism, and clothes in general forever. I've done all the wardrobe planner worksheets and read all the books (I'll link as much as I can at the end), but I've found them all to be either too intense or not comprehensive enough. I also find that planning **for** the traditional four seasons does not work for my climate. I'm calling this the Canadian Capsule **P**lanner because my year and my clothes need to span 80 degrees (Celsius) and a lot of different types of weather.

This planner is a visual representation of the system I have slowly developed over my adult life to fulfil my need to feel prepared for any situation while not having a massive closet full of clothes I don't wear. For me, this planner takes away the guess work and anxiety involved in dressing for all occasions. I always feel confident in the outfit I've chosen for an event, always feel like I have the appropriate accessories and outerwear to go with it, but also never feel decision fatigue when looking at my closet.

I call this a capsule wardrobe, but I consider my Canadian Capsule a way of life. The way I plan my clothes isn't a one-time event or an experiment – it's how I have curated my clothes and my style slowly over many years. My clothing is my armour, and feeling perfectly dressed in every situation helps me feel confident. I love knowing that at any second, in any season, I can be invited last minute to any event and I'll have an outfit perfectly appropriate but also reflective of my taste. The words, "I have no idea what to wear" never come out of my mouth. I also never agonize over having too many options. I get to save all of my creative decision-making for designing outfits way before I need them. I strive to have exactly the right amount of clothes and only keep the garments I truly love.

While this planner is designed for sewists who make their clothes, you can 100 per cent use it if you buy everything you wear. Just replace "make" with "get" and you're set!

This planner is for you if:

- you live in a climate that has extreme weather
- you hate stressing about what to wear to a last-minute event that pops up
- you like the idea of having a “minimal” wardrobe
- you find yourself with a disproportionate amount of clothes to a particular “season”
- you’re intrigued by capsule wardrobes, “French 5-piece” wardrobes, and uniform dressing

While this planner uses a lot of math and tables, don’t feel like you need to adhere to my method of deciding how much you need of what. Use my formulae and charts as a guide and then plan how you wish!



Part 1: Year at a Glance

I like to plan my whole wardrobe as one giant capsule with a lot of basics in neutral colours and a handful of other pieces that I switch out depending on the weather and themes. (I'm a teacher, friends, so you bet I have outfits for every school celebration including Valentine's Day.)

The purpose of this table is to help you map out the seasons that occur in your climate. Many places don't really have seasons, but where I live, we somehow manage to have more than four (most of them are different stages of winter). I like this chart because it helped me realize that a spring wardrobe isn't really a thing I need. Ottawa goes from winter and snow to heatwave in less than a month, so I have realized that it makes zero sense for me to make tons of beautiful spring dresses, because there will literally be two ideal days to wear them. It also made me realize that I contend with sub-zero temperatures and snow for six months of the year, and it's actually crazy for me to think that I only need one coat for that. I don't have a car and I walk, bike, and bus where I need to go, so having appropriate and pretty outerwear is necessary for all of the possible types of weather I might encounter.

Once you've mapped out your year, separate it into sections. Within each section you might have multiple seasons. For me, there are two main sections to my year: the warm months and the cold months. I've assigned one base neutral colour to each. I use my base neutrals to dictate my accessories purchases. I make sure everything I wear in the winter months works with black, so that I only need one pair of boots or coat or purse for each level of formality (more on that later). It makes putting outfits together much simpler, and also leaves me more room in my budget to have outerwear that fits any weather and occasion. Instead of having multiple pairs of leather boots in different colours for fall and winter, I have exactly five pairs of boots:

- grey ankle boots (Good from +15 to 0°C)
- black wedge booties (Good from +10 to -5)
- black rubber boots (Good from +10 to -5)
- black waterproof Thinsulate leather riding boots (Good from 0 to -20)
- brown lace-up boots for being active or really cold days (Good from 0 to -40)

These boots plus one pair of black sneakers, two pairs of black flats, and one pair of black pumps get me through seven months of the year and every possible situation I may find myself in. It took me many years to get here, and I spent a lot of money to invest in really good quality footwear, but they're all going to last me a long time. For the items I wear every day (such as my leather riding boots), I've found a good shoe repair shop that spruces them up every fall so they last me a good number of years. My point here is that if you can plan your wardrobe to avoid any redundancies, you might free up more money to make sure that you have all of your bases covered.



Part 2: Your Levels of Formality

One of the biggest things that has transformed how I plan my wardrobe is my Levels of Formality system. I have categorized social situations and occasions into five levels based on how formally I like to dress for them. The idea is that I don't need a special outfit for every single situation I might find myself in, but one good outfit that will work for a bunch of occasions. This helps me avoid running around frantically looking for the perfect dress for a wedding, or having decision fatigue when picking something to wear for a job interview. I take my time in advance to plan a few perfect outfits that will get me through the year (and often very hypothetical scenarios), and never worry that I've worn the wrong thing to an event. I try to make sure that these outfits are relatively timeless and aren't going to feel out-of-date in a year so that I'm not completely overhauling my capsule on an annual basis. I enjoy making myself one formal dress a year, but since I've adopted this routine, I have a few years' worth of formal dresses in my closet. I've always got an appropriate backup if the dress I'm making doesn't work out, and that takes the pressure off enormously. It also frees up time to make more practical clothes that I actually need.

For me, five Levels of Formality (plus two categories of activewear) get me through my whole year. Feel free to use my categories or make up your own. You may find that you have more or less Levels. Adjust according to your needs! Here's how I've organized my Levels of Formality:

Level 1: Chic Loungewear

Occasions: Lounging at home, greeting delivery people at the door, luxurious hotel stays, Skype dates on the weekend

Outfits: Leggings, loose-fitting tops, slouchy cardigans, robes and wraps, cosy wool socks, slippers

Level 2: Casual Outing

Occasions: Running errands, play dates, picnics, neighbourhood walks, casual hangouts at a friend's house, Casual Fridays

Outfits: Jeans and knit tops with sneakers, easy knit dresses and flats, tanks, shorts and Birkenstocks

Level 3: "Nice" Outfits

Occasions: Every day at work, dinner with friends, family get-togethers

Outfits: Nice jeans or slacks, collared shirts, tunics and boots, blouses, woven dresses and leather sandals

Level 4: Extra "Nice" Outfits

Occasions: Important work meetings, parent-teacher interviews, meetings with clients, baby or wedding showers, date nights

Outfits: Knee-length dresses with heels or flats, slacks, blouses and blazers

Level 5: Formal Outfits

Occasions: Weddings, graduations, galas, anything with a formal invitation

Outfits: Knee-length (or longer) dresses or jumpsuits and heels with a clutch

Sleepwear:

Occasions: Sleeping at home, in hotels, as a houseguest

Outfits: Leggings and tanks, matching pyjama sets

Activewear (inside):

Occasions: Yoga, YouTube workouts in the living room, occasional workouts in a studio

Outfits: Sports bra, athletic tank, athletic 3/4 leggings, sneakers

Activewear (outside):

Occasions: Swimming, biking, hiking, snowshoeing, tobogganing

Outfits: (Summer) Bathing suit and wrap, bike shorts and bike top; (winter) long leggings, snow pants and fleece, toque, neck warmer, gloves, mittens



Part 3: Seasonal Overview and Planner

Within the sections of your year, you probably have multiple seasons. In my “warm months” section, I have spring (which lasts realistically two weeks in early May) and summer (16 weeks from mid-May to mid-September). In the “Cold Months,” Ottawa experiences early fall (six weeks from mid-September to the end of October), late fall (November), early winter (December), the dead of winter (January, February, and March), and late winter (April). While my outerwear changes drastically during the Cold Months, I wear essentially the same types of outfits under my coat for these seven months. To get me through these long, cold stretches, I like to switch up the colours I wear a little bit to keep things interesting depending on the month. Each of these “seasons” is a separate capsule. You’ll likely have a large majority of clothes that stay in heavy rotation for half of the year, but I like to add in a few different pops of colour here and there to fit my mood or a holiday. Separate your year into sections and seasons however you like. This is just how I’ve done it.

The Seasonal Planner is where things get detailed. The Seasonal Overview chart helps give you an overview of your needs for the season in terms of weather and occasions, as well as a reminder of what colours you are dealing with. The Seasonal Capsule Planner Chart asks you to break down your typical week in this period. The idea is to identify how you’re actually spending your time and how many outfits of each type you need. My magic number is to have one week’s worth of clothes for every four weeks of a season. This means that for October, that very specific month of cool, rainy weather, I have just enough clothes to get me through one week and I repeat those outfits for four weeks. In the dead of winter (which is basically 12 weeks), I make sure I have enough clothes to get through three weeks without laundry, and I cycle through those three week’s worth of clothes all winter long. My logic behind this is two-fold. One: it gets extremely tiring to wear the same seven outfits on rotation for three months; and two: having a larger quantity of clothes that I wear throughout a longer period helps to keep them looking nicer longer. Again, you will figure out what works for you, but this is a benchmark that has served me well.

That said, even though I can get away with one capsule from November to April, I change my colours slightly to go with my mood. I wear more burgundy with occasional hints of mustard or rust around Thanksgiving. Around Christmas, I add a few bright red pieces. In the frigid months of January and February, I introduce a few cool pinks or icy blues. There's typically only one or two different garments I add in those months, but I find it's enough to keep things feeling fresh.

To fill out the Seasonal Planner, you need to think about your typical week in that time period. The chart prompts you to record how many hours per day you spend in a certain Level of Formality. Each column (day) should add up to 24 hours if you're accurately accounting for all of your activities. The weekly total (the rows) will give you your total hours spent in those clothes. I took this number and divided it by the number of hours I typically wear an outfit before washing it. This usually means one work day (10 hours) or two nights of sleeping (18 hours). I chose to round up any decimals to make sure I was covered for a good week and maybe a bit more.

There are probably Levels you don't wear in a normal week. For me, those are Level 4 (Extra Nice) and Level 5 (Formal). For any Level that you have a zero total for your typical week, record the required outfit total as one. This way, you have one outfit in your wardrobe at the ready when an occasion pops up. My Level 4 and 5 outfits are usually the same for the entire section of Warm Months and the entire section of Cold Months, so don't feel like you need a new formal dress for a one month "season." I typically have one light-coloured dress, light pumps, and a light clutch that I wear to every occasion from May through September. Yep. I wear the exact same outfit to every wedding, graduation, and baby shower in the season. Never, ever has anyone commented on my repeating and it doesn't bother me at all. I just spend a lot of time thinking about what to wear at the beginning of spring and let that good decision carry me through September.

The same goes for a lot of my clothes. For each section of the year, I have a core set of clothes and accessories in my base neutral and just rotate out a few items based on their weight and colour. Ditto for my indoor activewear. I have exactly one set of bra, tank, and leggings that I wear year-round for working out in my living room.

You'll notice that I left space at the bottom of the page for "Seasonal" inspiration. Feel free to write a few adjectives or add some pictures that are inspiring you right now. This is your little baby mood board. Do with it what you wish!

One more note: You can repeat a capsule for two seasons that aren't back to back. Weather-wise, I could get away with one capsule from June through September. I am a teacher, however, and I wear completely different clothes when working than in the summer. As a result, I have a hot-weather working capsule that I wear in June and September and a completely different wardrobe for July and August. Split things up however makes sense for your life!



Part 4: Uniform Planner and Seasonal Garment List

These last exercises will have you actually planning out what the outfits in your capsule wardrobe are going to look like. I really enjoy “uniform dressing” or “outfit formulas” because these ideas make it really easy to put together looks. Not only does it make it simpler, but it allows you to develop a signature look. There is no doubt in my mind that if you were to ask my coworkers to picture me, they would imagine me wearing skinny jeans, ballet flats, a collared tunic (a Kalle, for sure), and a long cardigan. This is because I wear this exact outfit four days a week when I’m working. Don’t feel like having a uniform locks you into a certain silhouette, though. For years, my go-to was full skirts and dresses that were fitted at the waist. Things change and that’s okay.

In fact, I have a few different uniforms for different situations. Most of my Levels of Formality look very similar (skinny bottom, loose top or a loose dress with a belt or some kind of defined waist), but I also have multiple uniforms for Levels that I wear a lot. For Level 3 (everyday work wear), I have three outfit formulas. One is a skinny pant with a collared shirt and a cardigan. The other is a skinny pant, collared shirt, and an oversized sweater, and the last is a loose dress with a belt.

It’s important to take into consideration your actual lifestyle and your aspirational style when making these formulas. What you actually wear should fall somewhere in between. I’m a teacher and have small kids, so everything I wear needs to allow me to move and also not worry about flashing anyone. Everything I wear fits in such a way that it accommodates my continually changing body. I almost never wear heels. All of my clothes are loose or stretchy. Very few of my clothes are shorter than the knee or have skinny straps. I wear shorts or tights under all my skirts and dresses. But I also try to make sure that anything I wear to work I would also wear to a trendy restaurant downtown with friends. I rarely do after-work drinks anymore, but I like the idea of being ready for it anyway. It helps me feel less like a frumpy mom.

In the Uniform Planner chart, you will notice a column titled “third piece.” The idea of the “completer piece” or “third piece” has floated around forever and basically means

that every outfit needs a third piece to complete it. You can take a basic pair of jeans and a white t-shirt and make it look like an intentional outfit by adding a third garment or accessory. My favourite third pieces are vests, jackets, hats, belts, cardigans, and necklaces. None of these items necessarily need to be statement pieces, but just an extra thing added to your top and bottom to make your outfit look complete. For example, I wear a hat every day in the summer. It's not just for sun protection, but also because the hot weather makes layering impossible, and wearing a hat makes me look more put together when wearing a basic sun dress.

You will also notice that I've only allotted two rows maximum for each Level. I come up with one or two outfit formulas for each Level and work within them. For example, for Level 3, I have two formulas: one for a woven dress and another for shorts. I have multiple outfits of each, but I don't stray from these combinations. I find it easier to get clothes that I can mix, match, and re-wear using this system. For Level 3, I need four outfits to get me through June and September. One formula is a woven dress and a cardigan. I have two or three woven dresses for working in hot weather and one or two cardigans that work with all of them. My other formula is Bermuda shorts and a collared shirt. I usually have one or two pairs of these shorts and two or three tunics to pair them with. I only need two Level 3 formulas but I've got a few outfits for each.

After you have completed the Uniform Planner chart, you can start to record your needs. I've made three lists in my chart (Alter/Repair, Make, and Buy), but you can change them based on your preferences. If you don't make your clothes, you could change them into Alter/Repair, Thrift, and Invest. The idea is simply to figure out what you need and prioritize your time, energy, and money. This is also a really good time to prioritize your needs. If you follow the "French 5-piece wardrobe" model, you should focus your energy or money on just five new things a season. I find this helps me to pick out or make great items that I'm going to love for a long time. My capsule is never truly complete, but is a constantly evolving collection that I'm slowly and thoughtfully adding to.

For my sewing friends, I've created a "Should I make it?" flow chart to help you decide what you should make and what you should just buy. After making most of my clothes for several years, I've come around to the idea that I don't want to make everything I wear and that's okay. It's also really hard sometimes to decide what you need to make first, so I made this little graphic to help you out. I find it really helpful to decide to

buy the garments I can wear easily off the rack so I can take my time making the things I can't. Taking the pressure off needing to make *everything* has allowed me to slow down and make a few things really well. Not only can this chart help you decide what is better made than bought, but it will also help you prioritize what you should make first and what could probably wait. Say goodbye to project paralysis and just start sewing!



Conclusion

My goal with this Canadian Capsule wardrobe planner is to share the strategies that have helped me relieve my anxiety going into new social situations. I grew up with a mom who hated shopping, and as a result, I never, ever felt like my clothes fit in. Nothing I wore ever fit right, was in style, or felt appropriate to the situation I was in and I was a really shy, awkward kid. As an adolescent and a student, I never had a ton of money, but tried really hard to use it well and buy (or make!) clothes that made me blend in and feel more confident.

I used to dread going out in winter or on rainy days because I didn't have appropriate footwear that would keep me warm and dry, but also look nice. I hated summer in general because I didn't have clothes that kept me cool, or fit my body, that also felt cute. I used to own a thousand party dresses that I wore once, but only one pair of jeans that I wore every day. I would get anxious when invited to go hiking because I didn't have the right clothes. I used to shop as a hobby and buy tons of trendy clothes that fell apart, but now buy a couple of things a year and research the crap out of them before I do.

While a lot of my confidence has come with age and experience, a lot also comes from feeling well-dressed. It's been a really long time since I've walked in somewhere and immediately felt out of place because of how I was dressed. My hope is that you can get there, too. Have fun planning your Canadian Capsule wardrobe, friends!



Links and Further Reading

[5 Basics Later, and You're Practically French, Who What Wear](#)

[The 10x10 Challenge, Un-fancy](#)

[Building a Remixable Wardrobe, Putting Me Together](#)

[Capsule Wardrobe Challenge, Love to Sew Podcast](#)

[Create Your Dream Wardrobe, Love to Sew Podcast](#)

[The Curated Closet, Anuschka Rees](#)

[Design Your Wardrobe, Seamwork](#)

[How to Make a Capsule Wardrobe and Create Your Daily Uniform, Minimalism](#)

[Project 333, Be More with Less](#)

[Should I make it? Flowchart, Couturios blog](#)

[Stylebook App,](#)

[Wardrobe Architect, Colette](#)

[Wardrobe Planning, Couturios blog](#)

[What is a Completer Piece, Putting me together](#)



Example Planner

Year at a Glance

	Neutral	Accent colours	Temperature range/ possible weather
January	Black	Pink, grey, white, icy blue	-30 to -10, snow
February	Black	Pink, grey, white, icy blue	-30 to -10, snow
March	Black	Pink, grey, white	-30 to +10, snow, rain
April	Black	Pink, grey, white	-10 to +20, snow, rain
May	White	pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia)	+10 to +30, rain, sun
June	White	pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia)	+20 to +30, sun
July	White	pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia), navy	+20 to +40, sun
August	White	pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia), navy	+20 to +40, sun
September	White	pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia)	+20 to +30, sun
October	Black	Burgundy, pink, grey, white, mustard	+10 to +20, rain, sun
November	Black	Burgundy, pink, grey, white	-10 to +20, snow, rain
December	Black	Burgundy, pink, grey, white, red	-20 to 0, snow, rain



My Levels of Formality

	Title	Occasions	Outfit ideas
Sleepwear	Sleepwear	Sleeping at home, in hotels, as a houseguest	Leggings and tanks, matching pyjama sets
Level 1	Chic loungewear	Lounging at home, greeting delivery people at the door, luxurious hotel stays, Skype dates on the weekend	Leggings, loose-fitting tops, slouchy cardigans, robes and wraps, cozy wool socks, slippers
Level 2	Casual Outing	Running errands, play dates, picnics, neighbourhood walks, casual hangouts at a friend's house, Casual Fridays	Jeans and knit tops with sneakers, easy knit dresses and flats, tanks, shorts and Birkenstocks
Level 3	"Nice"	Every day at work, dinner with friends, family get-togethers	Nice jeans or slacks, collared shirts, tunics and boots, blouses, woven dresses, leather sandals
Level 4	Extra "Nice"	Important work meetings, parent-teacher interviews, meeting with clients, baby or wedding showers, date nights	Knee-length dresses with heels or flats, blouses with slacks and blazers
Level 5	Formal	Weddings, graduations, galas, anything with a formal invitation	Knee-length (or longer) dresses or jumpsuit and heels with a clutch
Other:	Activewear (inside)	Yoga, YouTube workouts in the living room	Sports bra, athletic tank, athletic 3/4 leggings, sneakers
Other:	Activewear (outside)	Swimming, biking, snowshoeing	Bathing suit and wrap, bike shorts and bike top, long leggings, snow pants and fleece



Seasonal Overview

Time period/season: September	
Temperature range/ possible weather	+20 to + 30, sun
Number of weeks	4
Neutral colour	White
Accent colours	Pink, grey, chambray blue, "natural" (brown leather or raffia)
Occasions	First day of school, hiking, apple picking

Seasonal Inspiration



Seasonal Capsule Planner

Number of hours spent at each level									
	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total hours	Outfits required per four-week period (rounded to nearest whole number)
Sleepwear	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	63	(63/18 hrs = 3.5) 4
Level 1	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	32	(32/10hrs =3.2) 4
Level 2					10	10		20	(20/10hrs = 2) 2
Level 3	10	10	10	10				40	(40/10hrs =4) 4
Level 4									1
Level 5									1
Activewear (inside)	1		1		1			3	(3/10hrs = .3) 1
Activewear (outside)							10	10	(10/10hrs = 1) 1
Total for four week period	24	168	18						



Uniform Planner : June/September

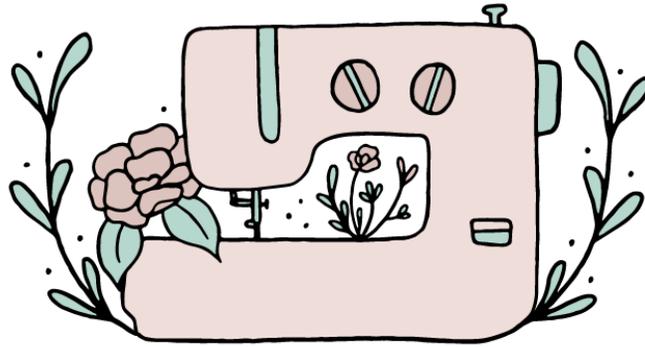
	Top	Bottom	Third piece	Accessories	Outerwear	Footwear	Outfits required
Sleepwear	Tanks (Adventure Tank)	Leggings shorts (Averys)	Robe (Suki Robe)	n/a	n/a	n/a	4
Level 1 Lounge wear	Knit t-shirt (Kalle Crop)	Leggings (Averys)	Light cardigan (Blackwood Cardigan)	n/a	n/a	Slippers	4
	Loose knit top (Mandy Boat Tee)	Leggings (Avery)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Level 2 Casual outing	Tanks (Adventure Tank, Ogden Cami)	Chino shorts (Chi Town Chinos)	Jean jacket	Leather belt	Jean jacket	Glitter keds (white)	2
	Knit dress (River Dress, Nikko Dress, Pony Tank Dress)	n/a	Jean jacket	Necklace	Jean jacket	Birkenstocks	
Level 3 Nice (everyday work wear)	Woven dress (Southport Dress)	n/a	Cardigan	White crossbody	Jean jacket	Huaraches	4
	Collared shirt (Kalle Tunie)	Bermuda Chinos (Chi town Chinos)	Cardigan (Blackwood Cardigan)	Navy tote	Jean jacket	Huaraches	
Level 4 Extra nice	Woven Dress (Orchid Midi)	n/a	n/a	White crossbody	Jean jacket	Wedges or huaraches	1

	Top	Bottom	Third piece	Accessories	Outerwear	Footwear	Outfits required
Level 5 Formal	Spaghetti strap dress (Calvin wrap)	n/a	n/a	Raffia Clutch (Olivera Clutch)	Wrap?	Wedges	1
Active (inside)	Athletic tanks	3/4 leggings	Sports bra	Yoga mat and block	n/a	n/a	1
Active (outside)	Athletic tank	Bike shorts	Sports bra	n/a	Rain coat (Kelly Anorak)	Sneakers	1



“Seasonal” Capsule Planner Garment List

Alter/Repair	Make	Buy
Re-sole Birkenstocks	Bermuda length chi town chinos	White or light grey sneakers
	Raffia clutch - Wool and the Gang kit	Athletic tank (pink or other pastel)
	Rainproof Kelly anorak	Athletic tank (white or grey)
		Sports bra (light neutral)



Samantha Schmidt

C O U T U R I O U S

The Canadian Capsule Workbook

Feel confident in any weather, in any situation



Year at a Glance

	Neutral	Accent colours	Temperature range/ possible weather
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			



My Levels of Formality

	Title	Occasions	Outfit ideas
Sleepwear			
Level 1			
Level 2			
Level 3			
Level 4			
Level 5			
Other:			
Other:			



Seasonal Overview

Time period/season:	
Temperature range/possible weather	
Number of weeks	
Neutral colour	
Accent colours	
Occasions	

Seasonal Inspiration



Uniform Planner

	Top	Bottom	Third piece	Accessories	Outerwear	Footwear	Outfits required
Sleepwear							
Level 1							
Level 2							
Level 3							
Level 4							
Level 5							
Other							
Other							

