



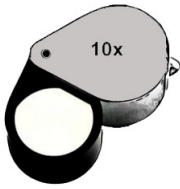
*Five Fab Tips
For Scoring
Vintage Fashion*

If you are new to vintage shopping you might not know where to start. After collecting vintage for over 30 years and selling vintage online here's our top tips for buying quality vintage jewelry, fashion and accessories.



I'm Pam, owner of MadgesHatbox Vintage. I hope you enjoy this guide. Please feel free to email me at info@madgeshatbox.com if you have any questions.

1. Buy A Loupe



If you're serious about shopping for quality vintage costume jewelry then it is essential that you buy a loupe. A loupe is a small magnifying glass that jewelers use to see small items more clearly. Without one it is easy to miss broken prongs or missing stones on an intricate piece of rhinestone jewelry. A loupe also allows you to see any jewelry hallmarks that may be stamped or engraved on the back of the piece. Typically, jewelry that is hallmarked retains its value more than unmarked pieces. A small, folding 10x-magnification loupe is perfect for the job and at less than \$20, it's money well spent.

2. Understand Vintage Sizing

When is a size 12 not a size 12? When it's vintage. Today's sizes have very little correlation to clothing size labels from past decades. Over the past 20 years designers and manufacturers have fed our egos by making standard size numbers smaller and smaller. Plus today's men and women are fitter, taller and have much more muscle tone of than people of earlier eras.



Even today's undergarments make a difference. Today's woman isn't corseted, girdled or wearing a stiff bra so even the thinnest of people sometimes have trouble with vintage sizing.

When shopping for vintage clothing online look to see if the shop has "measured flat" sizing on each piece of clothing. This means the garment was laid out flat on a table and measurements were taken from side-to-side. To compare, pull a like piece from your own closet. For jackets, blouses and dresses measure across the front at the shoulders, bust, waist, hips and length, preferably center back. The bust measurement is taken directly under the armpit. It's also a good idea to measure your sleeve length from the end of the shoulder to the wrist. For pants measure the waist, hips, length and inseam.

Keep these measurements handy and to be safe sure you are buying from a shop like MadgesHatbox that accepts returns.

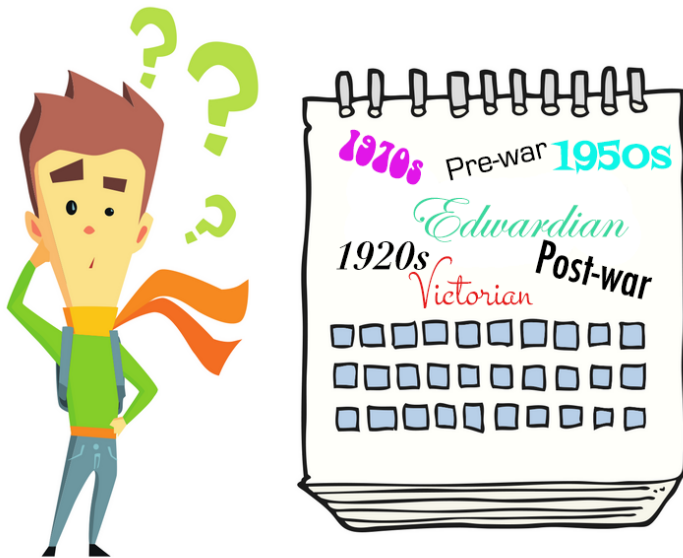
3. Know What's Repairable & What Isn't

A loose seam is easy to fix, a rip in the fabric, not so much. Standard replacement rhinestones may be purchased but colored or oddly shaped stones may be impossible to match. If you have fallen love with a vintage piece that must be repaired or cleaned make sure you have the skills or resources to make the repair. [Mr. Stones](#) is a great resource for locating vintage stones for jewelry repair they can either ship the stones to you or make the repairs themselves. Your neighborhood jeweler can often repair or replace clasps and restring pearls or other beaded necklaces. Oxiclean™ works well on many old stains in fabrics but please conduct a colorfast test first on an inconspicuous area. If you are lusting after a damaged vintage piece, resist the urge to purchase unless you have the confidence to make the repair. Just be aware that if you plan to resell a repaired vintage piece to honestly state what repairs were made.



4. Easy Ways to Date Vintage

There are a few tricks of the trade to help you date vintage items. For jewelry, the three main ways to quickly date items are closures, backs and jewelry marks. The earliest designs for brooch clasps were merely a long pin that anchored into an open C that date from Victorian times. Other clasps looked like trombones or safety pins. More modern brooches have a locking rotating clasp. Necklaces and bracelet closures had the same sort of progression from primitive to modern closures. There are several websites plus many sites on Pinterest that have charts showing various types of clasps if you Google "dating jewelry clasps".



The backs of jewelry, brooches, bracelets and pendants also have a story to tell. Early costume jewelry usually had a back made of pot metal, which was a variety of inexpensive metals mixed together. During WWII with metal scarce, jewelry manufacturers turned to sterling silver. After the war a material

called Rhodium was developed giving jewelry backs a distinctive shiny silver finish. Later pieces from the late 1970s on, in either silver or gold metal had a rough back rather than a smooth finish.

On rhinestone or other glass stone pieces, how the stones are set may also give us clues. Riveted pieces and open back settings are usually older than fully enclosed settings

Jewelry marks are also a good indicator of age. Many manufacturers changed their marks over time. Countries that went through political transitions also have differences in their marks that help with dating. A good example is Germany whose marks range from Germany prior to WWII to Western Germany, West Germany and German Democratic Republic, for East Germany. A wonderful resource for dating jewelry company marks is the [Researching Costume Jewelry Marks](#) by Illusion Jewels.

Patent marks may also give us a general range. Jewelry manufacturers were not able to copyright their designs until 1958. So anything with an R was made after that year and anything with the patent pending mark is 1958 or earlier. Nicer pieces often had patent marks on the design many of which may be found online through <http://jewelrypatents.com/>. Make sure you are researching a design patent rather than one for a mechanism whose design may have been used for many decades after the original patent date.

The same general rules also apply to clothing and hats. Many designers and countries changed their labels through the years. A good resource for this is the [Vintage Fashion Guild](#). Also look for union labels, in fact anything labeled in Made in the USA, as well changes in country names. As with jewelry, types of closures such as metal zippers rather than plastic also signal a vintage piece. Knowing these few basic rules on age will help snap up that really cheap piece that the seller thinks is from the 1980s but is really from the 1920s.

5. Handbags Are Your Best Buy

Each year the top price for each season's must have "It" bag increases exponentially. Where once \$500 was considered top-of-the-line, it increasingly looks like there are no upper limits. Ironically, once you buy that uber-expensive handbag you saved for months to buy, there will be

thousands of other women carrying the same one. Plus after you have paid that fancy price you look on the label it says made in China instead of France or Italy.



So is there an antidote to having to choose between high designer prices and mass-market sameness? There is and it's a vintage handbag.

Of course you can go nuts on price on a vintage bag just like a new one; those vintage Birkin bags are \$20,000+. But it's easy to find high quality vintage bags starting in the \$20 – \$30 price range, The keys are find a classic style such as a structured bag, hobo or clutch and get familiar with famous brands from the past. A great resource for researching vintage handbags is [Bag Lady University](http://BagLadyUniversity.com) with info on most major handbag brands from the 1920s – 1960s. You will find a fabulous handbag; very well made that no one else is carrying.

With these tips in hand you can go forth confident in your vintage savvy to find truly unique, one of a kind pieces that help define your personal style. Of course this is just a starting point as you gain more experience in vintage shopping you will develop your own tricks to find that perfect piece.



Of course a great place to start is at our shop.

[MadgesHatbox Vintage](https://www.madgeshatbox.com)