



What am I going to wear today?
The first question we all ask ourselves every day

By: Tammy Duffy, Fashion Designer, Stylist and CEO of DUFFY

I asked teenager girls for their fashion advice and what's the current fashion lingo. We then styled them for a special photo shoot in DUFFY Fashion Designs to develop new print ads for DUFFY.



Photos by Tammy Duffy, LLC © Artwork in photos by Tammy Duffy © All the girls are dressed in DUFFY®

How do teenagers really want to dress today? How do they communicate with each other as it pertains to fashion? To get this answer, DUFFY spoke to several teenagers in NJ to get their input. So, in essence, DUFFY had a “kick back” (new phrase I learned from the kids) with the teenagers to get the real scoop and quite the education on fashion for the teenage youth.

Let's talk about fashion for teenagers now....What am I going to wear today?

TD: How do you want to dress? Do you prepare the night before? What am I going to wear today? What's your goal when you walk out the door vs. when you are going out on a date?

Teens: We don't care, we wear uniforms, but we do have dress down days or we wear whatever we want. Some of us do prepare our outfits the night before. We can pretty much wear anything we want to school. Since it's been cold out and some of us go to college, we wear yoga pants, Uggs and Northface sweatshirts. Many of the kids are dressing vintage, buying their clothes in thrift shops.

TD: When I get up early in the AM and go to the track to run at the high school I went to as a kid, the fashions I see on the kids, especially the girls is quite outrageous. Way too provocative, short shorts, massive cleavage (I did not even get breasts till I was out of high school, I wore those ridiculous "training bras" that treat our breasts like we are a bike with training wheels on them) in my opinion to be going to school dressed in such a manner.

Teens: The kids are wearing combat boots, stockings with jean shorts. It's weird some of the things they are doing. They also wear see thru stockings with Tims.

TD: What inspires you guys to dress and what inspires others? Do magazines and TV influence you?

Teens: TUBMLR! The hipsters from Tumblr. You can name yourself on Tumblr. People will have a name such as, "Hipster girl" or something like that. The Hipsters are driving the trends. We do our own thing. We are not influenced by others, TV or magazines. We look at them but we do our own thing. We see what is on Tumblr but the hipsters are wearing things no one would wear.

TD: Many kids do appear to be that they look similar in their approach to dressing, jackets, blazers, jeans...

Teens: Yes, we guess so. The hipsters will take pictures of themselves in clothes that no one would wear or wears. People will see it on Tumblr and duplicate it. That is where everyone gets it from for the most part.

TD: Are you influenced by celebrities?

Teens: No we do not care what celebrities are doing.

TD: Are you influenced by music videos or the music industry at all?

Teens: Not really, the boys are influenced by it though

TD: Are people dressing up at school anymore?

Teens: Yes, the Pretty boys are. But overall people really are dressing better. They want to dress better. They want to impress people. They wear high heels (wedges) that are up to 6” inches high. We can wear anything as long as it’s not a tank top and short shorts. If we wanted to wear 8” heels we could and would not be sent home. People will wear tights with a pencil skirts and super high heels. They try to dress down the fancy heels. They wear mesh shirts that button up. The new thing people will wear a button up shirt under a sweater.

TD: This is good to hear. So I guess the high school I went to where I saw deplorable fashion ensembles did not get the memo from a standpoint of what the hipsters are saying.

TD: Do you guys read Seventeen magazine? In there they talk about the trends. Do you like what they are saying and agree? I found some of the dresses they state teens are wearing are the same trends that exist for adult women. But, some of the fabric selections in the magazine this month appear to be “frumpy” designs. Would you agree?

Teens: Yes, we read Seventeen. We also agree with them and like the vintage look, its hip. We agree we do not see “frumpy” looks. A lot of the clothing and style is coming back from the 40’s. Like highway sheen, combat boots, and high socks.

TD: This must get expensive for the parents, no?

Teens: Not so bad, we LOVE Forever 21. They have everything!

TD: Accessories, what is the most outrageous thing you have seen someone do?

Teens: Those shoes with no heel...moon shoes. When people do this they dress the shoe down. It’s not like they are going to NYC for the day. This is the trend.

TD: I love that they are doing this!! Makes the high school I went to as a kid really look like the oddballs. They need to step up their fashion sense. I actually spoke to several parents about the fashion sense of kids today, more so focused on the inappropriateness of some of the outfits I see kids in. Their response was, “They do not leave the house that way, but no doubt they are changing into different clothes once they leave the house. They have to pick their battles ” Do you see that still going on?

Teens: That is going away. Kids will just wear what they wear. They don’t care.

TD: What is happening with footwear? Sounds like the girls are wearing a lot of heels and various things. What are the guys wearing?

Teens: Both boys and girls wear Jordans, Uggs, Tims, Chucks

TD: Phone Accessories, what's happening with them? I saw an adult woman on the train the other day with a cutie crystal attachment for her phone the shape of an animal. I have seen kids with Japanese cartoon characters that are phone shields? Is this the norm?

Teens: (They showed me their phones) Yes it appears so. But the guys are now migrating to buying the "girly" type of cases for their phones, which is interesting. Pink and all. If you do not have this on your phone you are not with the trends.

TD: What do you think is the next thing that will happen in fashion for you guys? What do you aspire to have?

Teens: There is a guy (rapper) who wears dresses and heels. We think he does this just to be outrageous, but who knows. Maybe this will pick up with the hipsters.

TD: Are the guys in your schools still wearing their pants down to their hips?

Teens: Yes, we do not think this will change. They match their underwear to the outfit. For older people over 25 doing this it's not cool and just looks dumb.

TD: How much do your parents influence how you dress?

Teens: Not at all. We actually help our Mom's and Dad's dress. They borrow our scarves, purses, necklaces and things all the time.

TD: When did you decide on what you would wear, picking your own outfits, how old were you?

Teens: 5th and 6th grade. But girls are dressing like boys too. They will sag their pants and do what the guys are doing.

TD: Are the girls who are sagging their pants athletic?

Teens: No they are gay. One of our gay friends, she shaved her head in one spot and the rest of her hair is long like ours. They wear men's underwear as well. Kids are much more open today in school and openly admit to being gay.

TD: This is great to hear. So many kids I went to school (80's) with who were gay never openly admit they were gay in school. They hid it.

TD: What happens during formal school dances and proms? Can openly gay kids in our district attend as a couple?

Teens: In the catholic schools, no. They will throw them out and not let them attend. The gay girls will not wear dresses and dress like guys. In the Catholic schools if you are a girl you cannot bring a girl to the dance. You cannot wear a suit if you are a girl, gay or not.

TD: Catholics, please! OMG, that is just ridiculous. Do two girls who are not gay and are just friends and do not have dates to the event cannot go as a “couple” just to participate or god forbid wear a suit vs. a dress to the event. I was raised Catholic and this is just another example of the absurdity of the Catholic church. There are much bigger issues that the church should be focused on vs. ostracizing homosexuality.

Teens: One of our gay male friends had to ask if it would be ok for him to wear a satchel to school. So accessories like this are becoming more common.

TD: But this is super cool, for this exists for all men today even adults. With the technological age we live in and the multiple digital gadgets we all carry, we need somewhere to put them, including men. The man bag is readily accepted today.

TD: So the pretty boys are wearing the nicest clothes, are they also wearing nice fabrics?

Teens: Yes, but fabrics are not important to us at all, just the pretty boys. A lot of girls shop at the thrift stores. We can get great deals on great designer clothes for a few dollars what would have cost a lot in the mall.

TD: So, what’s happening with purses? Is this a big thing now, are they small, big, what’s the scoop?

Teens: Everyone has a main purse that they wear. Many wear Coach or Michael Kors. When they go out they wear little satchels (just holds your phone). At school they have big purses they use. The guys carry backpacks, Jansport. No fanny packs!

TD: What about socks?

Teens: When people wear UGGS they wear guys socks and bring it above so you can see it. They wear all colors. When they wear their uniforms they wear Nike socks in all colors with their shorts. We also wear socks with our flip flops. Super comfy and looks super cool.

TD: What’s happening with the teachers? Most of them are pretty young how are they dressing?

Teens: In high school, there is one teacher who looks like she is 19, she wears tight dresses to school with high heels. The teachers in college tend to dress like “old people”. They stick to their style from back then. Some of the young teachers will dress like us in a more professional way in some of the schools.

TD: Glasses, what are people wearing?

Teens: They wear Ray Bands and funky ones. If they go to a party they will wear sunglasses to be cool. Some will wear glasses that have pink bows just chillin” on the rim of the eyeglass. She bought them that way.

The preppies will wear Barbie wear. (see definition of Barbie wear below)

TD: What about hats?

Teens: They wear snap backs and street rims. They do not wear them directly on their head, they tilt them up. The guys do not wear many hats. Baseball hats are not worn by the guys. The girls will wear supreme hats and Polo baseball hats.

TD: What about rings for boys and girls?

Teens: Girls wear rings on all their fingers. They wear rings that take up their entire finger or several fingers. They wear 20 bracelets on one arm.

TD: Are kids shopping on line or in stores, are they migrating to more on line?

Teens: They are doing both, but most is done in the stores. We do not like to buy on line. We want to try it on and see it. We just go with our friends to just shop and leave. No one hangs out at the mall anymore. Friends just chill out and kick back.

A new thing we are seeing is that people put crosses on everything, whether they are religious or not. Sweaters, rings, bracelets all with crosses.

TD: This used to be a look for the deadheads years ago.

Teens: Hair is really changing. Color is a a big thing, pink, purple, green. Long hair is where it is at. If you have short hair you are probably gay as a girl. Many will shave their heads and keep the rest long. They also braid their hair a lot. They will be ombre looks where they dye the ends light and the top is dark. There was one girl who died it pink and orange. She looked ok though. The deadheads are wearing skulls.

TD: How do you dress for gym? Are there any kids dressing like hoochies in gym class?

Teens: Shorts and T-shirts we wear, but there are girls who wear boy shirts in gym that are way too short and the school lets them. At the public gym they wear huge tank tops with sport bras. The guys are wearing shorts and t-shirts.

I spoke to some of my married friends with teenagers after completing these interviews for I felt so not hip and out of the loop at the tender age of 47. As a couture and bespoke designer I do not get many teenagers as clients. I do not have any children of my own nor am I surrounded by teenagers in my every day life, so I had an excuse not to know. What I found interesting is that my friends with teenagers growing up in their homes did not know this stuff either. That made me feel much better, not so ancient.

Teenagers should never look sexy, they should look their age. All the kids I interviewed all looked their age. I found it refreshing to learn that there appears to be a trend to dress better and remove the grunge looks and inappropriate attire from the wardrobes of today's youth. That was refreshing to hear from the kids I interviewed. I think kids who dress provocatively are only inviting disrespect from males young and old. As parents, it's your job to teach your kids to respect themselves and to demand respect of others. This goes for the 20 and 30 year old guys who find it necessary to wear their pant waists by their mid thigh.

I really love the creativity these kids had. The lingo was so enjoyable. They could write a book on that alone. Bravo to their parents. They have guided them in the proper directions. Something that is not seen every day. The girls I picked for the DUFFY photo shoot for my spring line were great kids. These ads will be in Dalliance magazine. They demonstrated, style, respect and are completely in the know as it pertains to fashion. They taught me a lot. Even though they will say, "We don't care how we dress." They really do care. But I think they just define "care" differently than adults do. They take time to style their outfits more than most adults. In many cases, they are teaching the adults.

The kids really police their own world and scorn our rules in some instances. This is great in many ways when done correctly. Social media is a very important part of their world. Seeing what the hipsters are saying is hip and ignoring that and making their own decisions is fantastic. This is a great mindset for the kids to have. I can only hope this gets translated as they enter the work force and corporate America to have this same level of courage to make their own decisions, stand up for what is right and what they believe in and march to that drum. Being successful at developing looks that are not so dressed up takes more effort than one would think. The kids today are really making more of an effort than we ever did when I was a kid and I think that is just awesome!

NEW VOCABULARY for DUFFY, thanks to the teenagers!

There are only 3 that I actually ever heard of.

Kawaii girls: The girls dress in uniforms and maid costumes that are commonplace in Japan.

Pastel Goth: Sometimes referred to as soft grunge or nu goth, hair is pastel at times as well.

Meh: When you don't care.

Cosby sweater: An oversized, hideous looking sweater with ratchet patterns and colors, often worn by hipsters with no taste. It can also mean when you eat Fruit Loops, Fruity Pebbles, Trix, and Boo Berry- or any other 'bright, colorful' breakfast cereals- and then deliberately vomit on the tacky sweater that someone is wearing.

Ghost taste: It's a familiar taste that comes along with a post-meal burp. It's like deja-vu in your mouth.

DFTBA: Stands for: Don't forget to be awesome

Diana: Gorgeous girl

Hardcore girl: Try not to look like a specific style. Being your own person with your own style. Hoodies paired up with jeans can also be to describe a HCG.

Ratchet: Something viewed as ugly in fashion

Shirt Chasm: When a female is wearing a push up bra that does not match her boob size that leaves a gap in between the skin and her clothing than any man over 5'5" can see down

Hipster: If you are a hipster, you are someone who tries to start new trends. Not viewed in a positive light by the main stream teens.

Bad: To describe a girl who fashionable looks good. This phrase "bad" is never used to describe a boy's fashion sense.

Barbie style: There are 6 subcategories: **Glam, Sweetie, Cutie, Sporty, Artsy and Sassy.** Glam: loves to wear satin, animal print and faux fur. Sweeties: love to wear poufy skirts, big bows and soft pinks. Cuties: Love bright colors and heart-shaped accessories. Sporties: Love great athletic gear. Artsies: Love anything they made themselves. Sassies: are the hipsters.

Moon shoes: Super high shoes or shoes that make you bounce or shoes that have no heel. One is actually walking on your toes.

Kick back: Chilling at home with friends

Fashion dinosaur: Someone who makes their own clothes

Ham: Going ballistic on someone

Shirt charms: Breasts

Hats: Girl who is high class

Catholic: Someone who is addicted to cats.

Tim: A pretty cool guy who likes to talk and joke a lot if you're his friend but is pretty quiet if he doesn't know you.

Sock Puppet: An account made on an internet message board, by a person who already has an account, for the purpose of posting more-or-less anonymously

Wife beater: form fitting white ribbed tank top worn by men

Chucks: What we old timers would call, Converse sneakers in the past.

Tims: What we old timers would have called Keds

Skirt: Someone how has no morals

Shirt bag: A guy who insists on taking off his shirt while rambling on about how he's going to kick someone's butt, but never fights

Fashion goat: Someone who wears all kinds of styles and ignores trends.

Pretty boys: Guys who dress almost like girls, preppy. They wear nicer fabrics, Brand names. Etc. Also referred to as boy hipsters. Their wear plaid button shirts with jean jackets. They wear skinny jeans. Pastel t-shirts, UGGS, Their clothes fit perfectly



Photo by David Steele of Tammy Duffy