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There's nothing quite as glam as a hat worn the right way, and with the resurgence of the retro style, courtesy of fall runways and inspired by shows like "Mad Men," there's never been a better time to channel your inner Marilyn Monroe with a chic chapeau.

Just remember that it's important you're comfortable in your new topper, so you look pretty — instead of pretty silly.

Fashion designer Mary McDonald began her career as a milliner. Here, her best advice for choosing the perfect winter hat:

Size matters. "No matter one's face shape, never buy a hat that is too big for you, or barely fits. No one wants to be drowning in or squeezing into a hat." When choosing a hat, remember that the hat is meant to enhance, not hide, your best features, so even when you find your perfect style, make sure that the size of your hat doesn't obscure your perky nose or perfect Cupid's bow lips.

"You want your features to be the main attraction and the hat a nice accessory, not vice versa," says McDonald. Don't be afraid to mold the hat to your features: Gently bend the front or back brim, or try positioning the hat at different angles.

Out there, or always in style? Though a hat is only worn for a few hours, and its dramatic effect lasts a lot longer than an outrageous haircut or highlights, many women seem to be timid when it comes time to choose one. McDonald advises, "Making a bold statement is a great thing — as long as the hat makes the person wearing it feel confident and comfortable, not insecure."

If you're stuck on safer styles, McDonald says to focus on "the type of stitching, fabric and fit." If vintage is your thing, "find out what era the style of the hat comes from, and if it's [been] passed down from generation



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to generation in excellent condition. Most hat boxes say what year the hat comes from as well. Do your research."

Save face. Whatever the season, it's important to protect your face from potentially harmful UV rays. Shop around. Many hat makers these days use materials that protect your head from the sun.

Toss or keep. If your hat has pilling, or the color starts to fade, it's probably time to toss it, says McDonald. "Also, take a look inside — has the color changed? Is it dingy? If so, you know it's time to get a new hat." If your hat is in great condition at the end of the season, McDonald suggests storing it in a properly sized hat box: "[The box should be] a tad bigger than your hat, so that way the hat stays preserved and doesn't crease and lose shape."

And just in case you want to brush up on your hat lingo, McDonald offers a primer on some of the more popular hat styles:

Fedora: Felt hat that is creased lengthwise down the crown and pinched in the front on both sides.

Cowboy: High crowned and wide brimmed, best known as the defining piece of attire for the North American range rider.

Trilby: Soft felt men's-style hat with a deeply indented crown and a pinch at the front. Think a smaller fedora that's popular with women.

Bowler: A hard felt hat with a rounded crown. According to some accounts, it was originally created in 1849 for Edward Coke, the younger brother of the second Earl of Leicester. It's also known as a Coke hat.

Flat cap: Also known as a sixpence, scally cap, salmon hat, Dai cap or Jeff cap, it's a rounded men's cap with a small stiff brim in front.

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