



## it's almost formal season

And it's up to you whether you go all out or keep it simple, pile on the pressure or say no to stress, plan ahead or hustle last minute. Learn from some ladies who have been there, done that!

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### Oh the Pressure!

*At the end of year 12, everyone seemed to be looking forward to the formal except me.*

I'd finally found a gorgeous dress, a long, dark, blue gown which made me feel elegant. But crowds, high expectations, unfamiliar places and loud music was not a good mix. How could such a high-pressure event be anything but stressful? I wish I could tell seventeen-year-old me to stop expecting a drama-filled-movie-dance-scene and just expect a night out with friends.

Because that night out, in fancy clothes, ended up being just a fun celebration. The music was sometimes lame, and my friends and I laughed about it. The food was average, but the conversation was good. Nearly everyone was feeling excited because our graduation felt that much closer. Sometimes it felt overwhelming, and that was OK.

Because my date was a good friend, he understood why I sometimes needed a minute by myself after all the socialising. The pressure to act 'perfectly', which I'd expected, wasn't there. I remember my feet hurting from my silver heels, so I just slipped them off. I hid my bare feet with my long dress and joined in some very awkward and very fun dancing. The best choices I made weren't about my dress or accessories. The best choices I made for my formal were picking the right friends and not taking ourselves too seriously.

> **Naomi Lamont**

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### Just have fun!

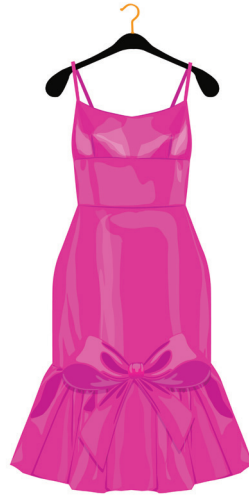
*It's finally the end of high school and you want to make sure you go out with a bang.*

So formal season is coming up and for many it can be a stressful time – finding the perfect dress, the perfect date, and getting the perfect photo with the squad.

At least those were my goals for the months leading up to formal.

But I'd never really been the kind of girl to fuss over how I looked and I didn't want to spend a lot of money on a dress I was only going to wear once, so I bought a dress at a thrift shop for \$8. One of the relief teachers did the alterations and a lady from my church did my hair and makeup. My date was the son of a family friend I hadn't spoken to in years who came up just for my graduation – at my mother's insistence, otherwise I would have happily gone alone.

What I remember most was how much fun my table had at the photo booth and how loudly my table cheered whenever my name was mentioned. One of the funniest things was hearing how a number of parents, a teacher and multiple students didn't recognise me when I first arrived because I had dyed my hair, was wearing a dress and had a full face of makeup, in contrast to my usual jeans and t-shirt style.



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Despite the anxiety I had beforehand, I ended up having a really good time because I spent my formal with the people who mattered most to me. > **Cat Duffy**  
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### Don't sweat the small stuff!

*My formal was a disaster.*

It was filled with family drama and there were some tears along the way. Thankfully (and this is my main advice) as much as formal is exciting, it is not the be-all and end-all of life.

Looking back now I can't stress enough how much the little details don't matter. I stressed so much about who I would take, what colour and the expense of the dress, how to do my hair and my makeup. I had a whole Pinterest board!

In the end I got my dress from Melbourne, I had my hair up and I did my own makeup. My date was someone I knew from years before who I haven't spoken

to since and we left when my dad wanted to leave, quite early on in the night.

You should wear something you feel great in and have your hair and makeup however you want. Remember though you're still young, so don't feel like you have to look 30! If you want to go alone, do it! You should have fun at your formal but try not to stress too much about all the details. I did, and I see now it wasn't worth the worry. > **Alexandra Stewart**  
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### Pick your pals

*I had always told myself I wouldn't spend a ton of money on a formal dress because I knew I wasn't likely to wear it again.*

But when formal time came around I did end up buying something more expensive than planned. I love my formal dress, and I'm happy I bought it but there's still a part of me that wishes I had tried harder to find a good bargain, considering my dress hasn't been worn since.

Thankfully, I didn't spend a lot on my hair or makeup, which was actually so minimal it didn't look like I was wearing any. I do wish I had put on a striking colour of lipstick, but I know in the moment I was really happy with how everything turned out.

I went with a friend who had asked me at the beginning of the year, although my boyfriend at the time tried to convince me to go with him instead. I'm really glad I didn't because we ended up breaking up later that year and now most of my formal photos are with my friend and not my ex. The idea of going to the formal with your boyfriend can sound like a good idea, but it's good to keep in mind to get multiple photos of yourself and whoever is with you as well as some cute couple shots. At least then, if worst comes to worst, you still have some great photos.

Otherwise I had a great time at my formal. I was actually so busy getting photos with all my friends and my teachers that I didn't even get to have our cake! > **Cielo Klass**