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## Baby, It's Cold Inside

This Summer Brings Fresh Styles for the Toughest Climate: Hot Weather and a Frigid Office

**Steamy Commute**



*Select to a light base layer to keep your clothes from getting sweaty and wrinkled. An office-ready bag holds layers for the day. 'Look for clothes that don't melt,' says Tracy Breslin, director of merchandising for Eileen Fisher.*

**Chilly Desk**



*A desk drawer can be a treasure chest of scarves. Desiree Gruber, co-founder of the Theodora & Callum line, tosses them around her neck or across her legs. Fold a fine-gauge cardigan in a desk drawer to keep it crisp and untagged.*

**Breezy Lunch**



*Off come the layers: Keep a cardigan or scarf with you for any air-conditioned café. A featherweight cardigan is 'a chic way to cover up,' says designer Jason Wu.*

**Frigid Boardroom**



*Adding a tailored jacket to the dress conveys a professional air, says Nancy Pevorstein, owner of the Washington, D.C., boutique Relish. The cropped length is modern, and the scarf adds extra punch. And warmth.*

BY CHRISTINA BENSELEY

Sented at your desk in a cardigan and gloves, with a cashmere throw on your lap? Then it must be summer: sweltering outside and arctic inside.

"They freeze you out in the office," says entertainment producer Desiree Gruber, who keeps a supply of scarves at her desk to wear around her neck or even across her legs.

The question is how to build a chic, office-worthy look that works indoors as well as out in the heat. Happily, this year's fashions offer stylish solutions, including lighter-than-ever cardigans, airy scarves and a variety of jackets, including ladylike knits, dashing fitted blazers and little cropped pieces with the ease of a denim jacket.

Take the featherweight cardigan. This light weave, a product of improved knitting technologies, is available in so many colors and fabrics these days that it's becoming an office staple. "It's light, it's soft, it's a chic way to cover up," says designer Jason Wu, who added very thin ponte sweaters to his pre-fall collection.

That lightness—also found in some of this summer's diaphanous scarves—is essential to prevent a wintertized look in July. Other ways to survive your office's climate change: Work in some of the season's bright colors and modern shapes, from the cinched-waist jacket to the cropped cardigan.

Frigid summertime offices are a top complaint among office workers. Nearly two-

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## Summer Style When It's Cold Inside

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thirds of office workers keep extra clothing at work to ward off the chill, according to a 2009 study by the International Facility Management Association. The study found that some people keep blankets and even "personal heaters" at their desks. "We have people with lap blankets and fingerless gloves on," said one respondent, according to the study. "Sad, isn't it?"

Yet some common solutions are less than stylish. I have a friend who often wears a down parka at work. The more common solution: a ratty pilled cardigan that lives on the back of a desk chair.

A more polished approach is to start with a base that you can build up or peel away. "I'm a big fan of layering so I can adjust my wardrobe," says Lisa Axelson, chief designer for Ann Taylor, whose New York office is freezing in summer.

Start with a slim blouse or dress that is sleeveless or has short, trim sleeves that won't look bulky under layers. This is what you'll wear outside in the heat, so it should look polished enough to stand on its own. The minute you strip down for the short walk to lunch is the minute you'll bump into the chairman of the board.

When stocking up on featherweight cardigans, the keys are texture and breathability. To add punch to an office look, seek out knits with interesting weaves and detailing. Nancy Pearlstein, owner of the Relish store in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C., suggests a Marni cardigan that has an eye-catching basket-weave texture.

At her Savannah boutique in Santa Monica, Calif., Susan Stone leans on the German cashmere brand Allude, which makes a variety of fine-gauge cardigans, some without buttons. "They're sleeves—that's what you're looking for," says Ms. Stone. A longer style can be belted for a pulled-together look. A cropped version keeps the look trim. Of course, unlike the dad-cardigan that you wear at home, the office cardigan should be free of pilling and snags.

The '90s twinset should be approached with caution. The preppy staple these days can look outdated. Yet it's possible to find a matching shell and cardigan with pizzazz. Ms. Stone recently ordered color-blocked twin sets from Prabal Gurung with periwinkle trim that stands out against burnt orange blocks.

Keep in mind that a cardigan has a soft, cozy look. But if you're head-



(clockwise from left) J. Crew; Brunello Cucinelli; WireImage/Getty Images

Stylish cover-ups include a J. Crew cardigan and a light scarf from Brunello Cucinelli. A cropped Chanel jacket with three-quarter-length sleeves is both chic and practical.

ing in to the corner office to beard the lion, a more tailored look may be more powerful.

Ms. Stone gives a vigorous nod to Giambattista Valli's sheath dresses with small cutaway jackets that have three-quarter sleeves. High-end fabrics and excellent tailoring make these boardroom-worthy.

The matched suit has made a return to fashion—but you can't just pull out your '90s workhorses, as contemporary fits are slimmer. Blazers now come in materials such as stretch twill.

A knit tailored jacket can also work wonders, offering comfort but also a polished, structured shape that is wrinkle-resistant. Chanel and St. John are known for their knit jackets, but these days, tailored knitwear jackets can be found at all price ranges, with many silhouettes and with twists such as bright orange trim on a Tory Burch version. Some have peplums, darts and other details that elevate their style and femininity.

Ms. Gruber calls scarves "the Swiss Army knives of accessories." She keeps a supply of scarves in the lower left drawer of her desk, along with a pair of flip-flops and an umbrella. She can wrap one around her neck, throw it over her shoulders, or, in a frigid conference room, drape it casually across her legs when seated.

In fact, she found scarves so useful that two years ago, she launched

the Theodora & Callum line of scarves with her friend and designer Stefani Greenfield, naming the brand for their kids. The brand offers colorful, printed, soft scarves that can be arranged around necklines and jacket collars. Their tribal and ethnic motifs and fairly large-scale patterns make them look current.

"Look for clothes that don't melt," says Tracy Breslin, director of merchandising for Eileen Fisher. Summer heat and humidity can seal in wrinkles as effectively as any steam iron. Cotton and featherweight versions of merino and cashmere breathe well, so they are cooling and are less likely to hold wrinkles, especially when blended with synthetics.

One key to successful layering is keeping each layer light. Consider jersey fabrics for the base: They lie close to the body, and tend not to wrinkle. There is nothing hotter than a synthetic lining, and cotton or silk linings are rare, so look for unlined tailoring, or semi-lined apparel that leaves plenty of space for air to flow.

The last essential item for summer layering is a bag big enough to accommodate that featherweight cardigan, tailored knit jacket and scarf. This should be as office-ready as your clothes, so you don't look like you're hauling around dirty laundry. Tie your scarf to the handle, fold your cardigan neatly into a corner, lay the jacket across the top, and head into the day with confidence.