# The Buying■Cycle

How a fashion season actually works

A season in fashion retail runs on a precise timetable. Miss a milestone and the consequences compound.

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1

**RANGE PLANNING**

*9 – 12 months before season*

Review last season's trade. Set OTB budget. Agree brand direction and category split with stakeholders. Define key themes, price architecture, and entry/exit points.

2

**TREND RESEARCH**

*8 – 10 months before season*

Analyse catwalk, trade shows, consumer data, and competitor ranging. Identify the trends relevant to your customer. Build the mood and direction your range will respond to.

3

**SUPPLIER SOURCING**

*7 – 9 months before season*

Brief existing suppliers. Approach new ones where needed. Issue design briefs, request prototypes. For CMT: source and approve fabrics before briefing factories.

4

**RANGE BUILDING**

*6 – 8 months before season*

Develop product against the agreed framework. Balance silhouette, colour palette, and price points across categories. Review and edit with design, buying, and trading teams.

5

**CRITICAL PATH OPENS**

*6 months before season*

Time and Action plan agreed with all suppliers. Every milestone — proto approval, salesman sample, photo sample, production — has a date. Slippage here affects everything downstream.

6

**SAMPLE REVIEW**

*4 – 6 months before season*

Review salesman samples (SMS) against brief. Approve colours, construction, fit, and trims. Raise amends. Confirm commercial samples for photoshoot and trade sell-in.

7

**ORDER PLACEMENT**

*4 – 5 months before season*

Raise purchase orders against confirmed OTB. Agree delivery windows, incoterms (FOB / DDP), payment terms. All orders go through finance sign-off before issue.

8

**PRODUCTION & QC**

*2 – 4 months before season*

Factory produces against approved samples. QC team conducts in-line and final inspections. Failed inspections are re-inspected or rejected. Booking freight against critical dates.

9

**DELIVERY & INTAKE**

*0 – 4 weeks before season*

Stock arrives at DC. Processed, quality-checked, allocated to channels. Any late deliveries assessed for markdown risk. Phase deliveries managed to avoid stock build-up.

10

**SEASON LAUNCH**

*Week 1 of season*

Product goes live in-store and online. Marketing activity aligned to product drops. Buying team watches early trade signals — sell-through, returns, size curves — for in-season decisions.

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11 **IN-SEASON TRADING**

*Throughout season*

Weekly WSSI review. Identify bestsellers for repeat or reorder. Slow sellers reviewed for markdown or promotion. OTB adjusted based on trade. Competitor monitoring ongoing.

12 **END OF SEASON REVIEW**

*Final 4 – 6 weeks + post-season*

Clear residual stock via markdowns or off-price channels. Conduct full sell-through analysis. Feed learnings into next season's range plan. Archive supplier scorecards.


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