Dressing (solution)

by Ong Kah Kien

The first step is to solve the 27 given text clues. Each clue has a one-word answer (two being hyphenated as indicated in the clues) in alphabetical order. The table below summarizes the text clues and answers:

Clue answer	Text clue
AI	Spielberg sci-fi film
ALLY	Strategic partner
CAMERA	Smartphone function
EGGS	They often take a beating
FOOTWEAR	Shoes, boots, etc.
FUNGI	Yeasts and molds
GREEN	Not ripe yet
IN	Entrance sign
ISSUES	Matters at hand that need resolution
KEYBOARD	Computer input device
LGBTQIA	Seven-letter acronym for spectrum of sexuality celebrated in June
LOCKED-IN	Guaranteed, as interest rates (hyphenated)
LOGO	Educational programming language known for its use of turtle graphics
NO	Word of refusal
NOODLES	Chinese restaurant fare
NOOK	Cranny counterpart
NS	Conscription to military duty, for short
ODOROUS	Skunk-like, say
OF	Between part and whole
OLLIEING	Doing a basic skateboarding trick jump
OPPOSE	Disapprove of
PLUG-IN	Designed to be connected to a power source (hyphenated)
SHIRT	Garment lost in gambling
SO	Very, extremely
START	Begin proceedings
TO	Goes with fro
YOGI	Person who practices asanas

The answers (specifically the letters that each word comprises) represent a jumbled pile of clothing. The second step is to sort these answers into matching outfits as hinted in the flavortext. Since there are 9 words given as “outfits”, the answers should be grouped in sets of three. A number of the answers are short, with some being prepositions, suggesting that the matching sets of three words could form a meaningful phrase. Each of these phrases is a clue answered by a corresponding outfit word given. In addition to the semantic way to match the sets of three words, each set also shares the aha commonality of containing three consecutive paired/doubled letters. This is hinted by the flavortext mentioning each outfit includes “a paired top, belt and bottom”, the doubled letter in each outfit answer, as well as the image of these left-right symmetrical clothing items, in particular the belt with two rings. The end letters of the middle word in each phrase are two different doubled letters, which

thus can be used to help pair with matching end letters in the first and last word in that set/phrase. The table below summarizes these sets of phrases formed from the clue answers, with the three consecutive paired letters corresponding to the tops, belts and bottoms indicated:

	Tops	Belts	Bottoms		Outfits
LOCKED-I	N/N	O/O	LL	IEING	SLAPPIE
GR	EE	N/N	S/S	HIRT	TEE
E	GG	S/S	O/O	DOROUS	ROTTEN
CAMER	A/A	I/I	SS	UES	MISCORRECTIONS
STAR	T/T	O/O	PP	OSE	CHALLENGE
NOR	I/I	N/N	OO	DLES	SEAWEED
LOG	O/O	F/F	OO	TWEAR	SWOOSH
PLUG-I	N/N	OO	K/K	EYBOARD	ADD-ON
LGBTQI	A/A	LL	Y/Y	OGI	BERRA

The sample image and headers also hint that the tops and bottoms (both in green) should be examined together, while the belt (in red) could be ignored. Reading the paired letters corresponding to the tops and bottoms in given outfit order gives NEGATION ALSO SPOOKY. These can be interpreted as three new text clues that would yield one-word answers each. And importantly, following the same pattern earlier, the three answers would form a phrase containing three consecutive paired letters. The phrase comprising the three words that fits the extracted three text clues, given enumeration and three consecutive paired letter constraints is **NOT TOO EERIE**, which is the answer to this puzzle.

Constructor's notes:

In order to incorporate shorter and more accessible puzzles for this year's hunt, the majority of the puzzles would rely on or incorporate wordplay mechanics. For this puzzle's answer, the presence of the three consecutive double letters provided a potential unique wordplay element. And to tie in with the dressing theme, I got the idea of using the analogy of putting together matching pieces of clothing. While I had imagined the concept of three-word phrases having three consecutive double letters being quite challenging to construct, the implementation turned out to be more constraining than expected. For instance, the extraction was quickly simplified to use just the first and last doubled letters, as I realized that some flexibility was required for the middle doubled letters in order to form meaningful clue phrases. The phrases were still too broad, and so the clued outfit answers had to be given, although this now allowed for them to also have a doubled letter to hint the aha. The text clues could afford to be less direct as well, so that solving them and performing the matching is not too straightforward and easy for solvers.