

Not Everyone is a Size 9!

Wardrobe Strategies for Women

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“Gee, you really look great today!”

“I’ve never seen you look better!”

What a terrific way to start the day with comments such as these. Instantly you feel good about yourself and the world around you.

Looking good is not a function of body size. It is a function of appropriate clothing and good grooming techniques.

Understanding & Accepting Yourself

Everyone isn’t a size nine! Take a quick look around at the grocery store, downtown, or even in your circle of friends. There is a growing number of large individuals. If you fit the category of wearing a size 12 or larger, you are not alone.

Learning to look and feel beautiful begins with recognizing, understanding and accepting yourself. Fitting the full-figured woman is not merely a case of enlarging a small silhouette; it requires detailed attention to scale and proportion. Garment size is not the issue — body image is!

Importance of Body

Types & Analysis

The first step in taking control of your image is to recognize and understand your figure. Everyone is different; no one is completely perfect. There are, however, four basic body types or shapes: pear, inverted pear, rectangle, and hourglass.

The easiest way to get to know your body is to confront yourself in front of a full-length mirror wearing a form-fitting body suit or your basic undergarments (bra and panties). All you need is a pencil, the Body Analysis Check Sheet on page 3, a few minutes of time and your best impartial judgment.

Learning How to Look Good

Learning how to look good is simply a matter of understanding your body and using wardrobe strategies to enhance the positive and conceal the negative. We begin this process by setting a goal to achieve what is known as the “visual ideal silhouette.”

This so-called ideal silhouette is one which is attractive and pleasing to the eye. Colors, lines, designs and textures must be in good balance and proportion with sufficient rhythm and emphasis to create harmony with one another and with the individual. It’s really not as complicated as it sounds!

Pay close attention to your own body proportions — know them well before you shop. Length as well as width can have dramatic influence on what is good and not so good.



Pear

Inverted Pear

Rectangle

Hourglass

There are garment silhouettes, fabric textures and colors to flatter each individual. The secret is to match appropriate garment qualities (lines, designs, colors, textures) with each individual's body characteristics.

If a specific "in-fashion" trend is not right, don't buy it! A poorly selected garment can be more destructive to your appearance than last season's fashion. Be very selective; learn to pick and choose wisely. Fashion can be fickle!

Garment Fit

Proper garment fit is critical regardless of size; however, for the full-figured women it becomes a must. If garments are too big, they fail to camouflage; instead, they emphasize size. If garments are too skimpy and tight, they call attention to unattractive body areas.

Forget the word size and focus on garment fit! Wishing you were a size smaller doesn't make it so. Garment size is between your body and your mind. Good fit has flattering proportions in scale with the body. Good fit is not only flattering to the figure, it is also comfortable to wear.

Wardrobe Strategies

The wardrobe strategies you use to create successful, good-looking outfits will depend on your body type, body proportions (length and circumference), personal coloring, personality type and life style. Because everyone is different, there are no set formulas or prescriptions. There are, however, some basic guidelines to use as you discover and put together your own personal wardrobe strategy.

Begin building your strategy with your body type (pear, inverted pear, rectangle, hourglass). Add your other body dimensions, such as height, body parts and proportions. Now pick and choose those fashion elements that help you create that ideal image.

Below are some basic guidelines to assist you.

- Think of the eye as a "visual" measuring tape. The area where the eye stops or rests momentarily will create emphasis or weight. The eye looks at and follows silhouette lines, color contrasts, texture contrasts, shape and design contrasts.
- Understand the relationship between the lines of a garment and the shape of your body. Horizontal lines tend to add width; vertical lines tend to add length, while diagonal lines vary between the two depending on the slant of the line.
- Dress to balance your body proportions. Select lines, designs, colors and textures to "even out" the body's dimensions rather than calling attention to the small parts. Calling attention to small areas may only emphasize the larger segments.
- Think scale, shape and spacing. Example: A plus-size woman carrying a small envelope handbag calls attention to her size due to contrast.
- When combining different patterns, make one theme, shape or color dominate. Florals mix well with other florals; geometrics mix well with other geometrics. Theme could be casual, dressy, western, etc. Avoid too much activity — keep it simple!
- Plan your use of color, line and texture. One color or color idea, one type of line and one texture should dominate. Three is the maximum to use. For example: Limit your use of individual colors to three, i.e. rose blouse, purple skirt, teal belt combined with print jacket with all three colors and purple shoes.
- Look out for the spots! Create a pleasing image which allows the eye to move smoothly from one part of the body to another better known as rhythm. Example of the "spots": navy coat dress, red hat, red bangle bracelets, red shoes.

Summary

Creating a pleasing visual image is the issue, not body size or body dimension. Get in tune with yourself. Recognize and learn to deal with your real body image. By carefully selecting and using figure flattering clothing you too can create an attractive and successful wardrobe. The ultimate goal is to select clothing that will enhance the figure, create a pleasing optical illusion, and give a well-proportioned look for all garments and outfits in your wardrobe.

For additional information on clothing lines, designs, colors and textures to flatter your figure, contact your local County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent. She can provide some additional information and various work sheets to help you make the most of your good looks.

Body Analysis Work Sheet

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Complete the information below to the best of your judgment. If at all possible, use a full-length mirror. Body analysis is most accurately determined dressed in a body suit or basic underwear (bra and regular brief-style panties). Refer to page 1 for body type shapes.

Body Type: Pear Inverted Pear Rectangle Hourglass

Height:

- Short (under 5'4")
- Tall (over 5'6")
- Average (5'4"-5'6")

Face Shape:

- Round
- Square
- Long
- Heart-shaped
- Oval

Neck:

- Short
- Average
- Long
- Broad
- Narrow

Shoulders:

- Narrow
- Average
- Broad or square
- Rounded or sloping

Bustline:

- Small (A-cup)
- Average (B-cup)
- Full (C-cup)
- Very full (D or above cup)

Arms:

- Length:
- Short
 - Average
 - Long

Shape:

- Heavy
- Medium
- Slim

Waist:

- Length:
- Short-waisted
 - Average
 - Long-waisted

Size:

- Small
- Medium
- Large
- Not defined

Derriere:

- Flat
- Rounded
- Protruding

Stomach:

- Flat
- Rounded
- Protruding

Hips:

Full Hipline Locations:

- Short (7" or less from waistline)
- Medium (8" to 9" from waistline)
- Long (9" or more from waistline)

Shape:

- Narrow
- Medium
- Wide

Legs:

- Length:
- Short
 - Medium
 - Long

Overall Shape:

- Full
- Average
- Slim

Thigh:

- Heavy
- Average

Calf:

- Heavy
- Average
- Slim

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