

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Sacramento City College

Career Services

Camie Foster Corley
(916) 558-2384

<http://sconestop.org>



A PROPER FIT

Making sure that your clothing fits you properly is the first step in dressing for success. Proper fit means appropriate size, shape, style and color. You can find clothing that will compliment your size and shape.

Keys to choosing the right clothing:

- Know your body shape.
- Evaluate yourself; know which physical characteristics you should emphasize and which you should not.
- Determine your personal assets and liabilities; do you have a long neck? Short waist?
- Examine how your clothes fit; how each item fits you.
- Try on clothes from your wardrobe.
- What looks best on you?

A GUIDE TO THE PROPER FIT FOR WOMEN

Suit Jackets and Coats - Jackets and coats should hang straight from the shoulder to the hem. They should fit smoothly over other clothing (blazers, shirts, sweaters and vests). The collar should lie flat against the back of the neck. A coat's sleeve should hit the wrist bone when the arm is bent. A jacket's sleeve should fall at the wrist bone. A full-length coat should cover your skirt length. When trying on coats or jackets, swing your arms backward and forward to test for a comfortable fit.

Skirts - Skirts should fit smoothly across the seat and tummy, with no pulling or wrinkling. Pleats in skirts ought to hang straight and closed when you are standing. The waistband should hold the skirt in place, but not so tight that it's uncomfortable and pulled out of shape. Hem lengths can be shortened to the current fashion length.

Dresses - If you are buying a belted dress, make sure the waistline of the dress hits your natural waistline, not above or below. In a dress with a fitted bodice, the vertical waist-to-bustline darts should end right at the tip of the bust. If you are buying a vintage dress with side darts at the bustline, they should fit the center of the breast and end at the tip the breast. Also check the shoulders of the dress. They should not droop past the end of your own shoulder, unless the dress is designed with a droop shoulder.

Slacks - Slacks should fit comfortably in the crotch area-never hanging below, but never so tight that the seat area is pulled. Make sure the pockets are lying flat; they should not be pulled tight or gaping open. "Baggy" slacks should be loose around the hips and

tummy. The pleats are not meant to be filled out, but to hang loose. If you are short-waisted, don't choose a high-waistband. This will make you appear shorter. Slacks with cuffs and straight-leg slacks should not be angled at the hem. This is true also for slacks that you wear with a higher heel. Angle the hem slightly on slacks worn with flats or cowboy boots. On most slacks, the front hem length should just hit the top of your shoe, letting the slack hang straight with no breaking.

A GUIDE TO THE PROPER FIT FOR MEN

Suits -There are two shoulder shapes in suits for men, the natural (soft-shape) and the European (roped, squared-off shape). The natural shape has a minimum of padding. This type of suit fits a more muscular build and a heavier frame. The European cut is more heavily padded and fits more snugly around the armholes. The chest area fits tighter, and the waist is nipped in slightly. This type of suit best fits a slimmer body shape.

Jackets -There should be no rippling of material when the jacket is buttoned. The jacket should be smooth across the back from shoulder to shoulder. The collar fit should show $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of the shirt collar at the back of the neck. Average lapel width ranges from 3 to 4 inches wide. To determine the proper length for the jacket, check the waist and make sure it corresponds with your own waist. If so, the jacket will fall at the correct point at the bottom. It's important that the sleeve length allows the cuff of the shirt to show. The proper amount of shirt showing below the sleeve depends on the length of your hands. If you have long arms or large hands, show only a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of cuff. If you have short arms and small hands, allow a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of cuff to show.

Jacket Vents

Center Vents - these are seen on natural shoulder jackets. They allow the typical American male shape (larger in the hips than European) more freedom of movement. The vent should lie flat when you are standing still.

Side Vents - these are commonly used in European jackets. They are less flattering to fuller figured men but work very well on a slimmer figure. There should not be any gaping in the side vents; they should lie flat.

Vent-less - this type of vent is shown mostly in European jacket styles. Again, this is not for the fuller, muscular male. The vent-less jacket fits snugly around the hips and waist, and is balanced by the shoulders.

Trousers - Trousers should fit well across the stomach, hips and rear. They should be comfortable and not pull in the crotch. The fit should not be tight over the thighs and calves. The pant leg should hang straight from the waist with a slight break of fabric on the tip of your shoe (no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch). The average trouser width at the hem is 19-20 inches. Cuffs on trousers should measure about $1\frac{1}{4}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width; they should not break at the top of the shoe but be level with it.

FITTING GUIDELINES

1. Try on every garment you buy.
2. Check the fit in a three-way mirror if possible.
3. Once you have tried on the garment, move around, sit down and stretch in it.
4. See how the garment feels. There should be no pulls, no uncomfortable bunching of material.
5. Notice how the garment looks. There should be no bulges or wrinkles
6. Ask yourself if you really like the garment.
7. Is the garment versatile?
8. Check out your problem areas. Does the garment flatter you there?

DRESSING FOR YOUR FIGURE TYPE - MEN

Short Men

- Avoid sharp, contrasting colors
- Wear solid-color suits
- Choose textured fabrics or vertical stripes of medium width
- Avoid long vests; they'll have a shortening effect

Tall Men

- Wear contrasting colors, rather than solids.
- Double-breasted suits will help add width.
- Bright shirts with ties that aren't too narrow will take attention away from your height.

Thin Men

- Avoid big sweaters; too much bulk can over-emphasize thinness.
- Don't pick suits with vertical stripes or narrow pin stripes.

Heavy Men

- Stay away from sportcoats.
- For a sports jacket and pants outfit, stick to the same color family. Choose a single-breasted suit in dark colors.
- Subtle designs work best.

DRESSING FOR YOUR FIGURE TYPE - WOMEN

Short Women

- Choose small patterns.
- Stay in the same color family.
- Pick simple, classic clothing lines.
- Avoid ruffles, fussy detail and bulky styles.

Tall Women

- Contrast your colors.
- Wear a light top with a dark skirt.
- Avoid fussy looks: elegance is your best bet.
- Wearing heels is optional

Thin Women

- Choose blouses with pleated fronts or other details.
- Choose slacks with front pleats.
- Avoid vertical stripes and elongating narrow lines.
- Pick shoes with a medium heel.

Large Women

- Choose clothing that fits well; avoid clothes that hang loosely or fit too tightly.
- Wear straight-leg slacks.
- Wear colors in the same color family; darker colors are more slenderizing.
- Pick medium-sized accessories in handbags and jewelry.

BARGAIN SHOPPING LIST

It is always a good idea to make sure that you are getting the best quality workmanship. Be sure you've checked seams, stitches, fabric and design.

Check to make sure the fabric of your garments is durable, good looking and will not be too expensive to maintain. If the fabric requires dry cleaning, is it one that will not be a cleaning risk?

Is the garment a classic design, one that you will wear for many seasons? Or, if it is a trendy item, are you buying at the beginning, middle or end of the trend?

Does the garment fit properly and enhance your best features? Is the garment going to require expensive alterations?

Is the price of the garment reasonable, high or a real steal for what you're purchasing?

QUALITY SHOPPING PLAN

To help you select the “good stuff” and ferret out the quality items, follow this shopping plan at any second-hand clothing source.

1. Before you go shopping, flip through fashion magazines and see what stores are showing in colors, patterns, and style design. Take a look at current retail prices too. Apply this knowledge to your second hand finds. You’ll be more aware of the alteration possibilities and better able to spot a fashion repeat; this is a garment whose time has come again.
2. Inspect items carefully. Look for quality in construction and good fabric. Check all the stress points for good condition.
3. Read all clothing labels to help determine quality. Look for designer labels. In men’s suits, you will sometimes find the date the suit was bought on one of the inside pockets of the jacket. This will give you an idea of how old the suit is.
4. Read the fiber content labels. Go for 100% silk, wool and cotton, or a good blend of natural fabrics and synthetic fiber. Sometimes fiber labels are missing. Train your hands to recognize the feel of good fabric by touch. Polyesters are shiny and slippery to the touch.
5. Try on everything you like. Sizes are often misleading or altogether missing on second-hand clothes. If the garment is too large, you may want to have it altered. Do this only when the fabric is excellent and the altering job is not major. You can make things smaller, not larger.
6. Go for the classic designs. Previously owned clothes with classic designs will last through several owners.
7. Shop for all jewelry and accessories at second-hand sources first. You will find quality items which cost less than the poorly made items at discount chain stores.

THE ACCESSORY ADVANTAGE

Accessories give an invitation to look, to enhance, to show off...you.

- T.J. Reid, author, Fashion, Fun and Feelings

- Four inch rule - A necklace should fall at least four inches below the neckline (if it is not a choker), and three to four inches above the waistline.
- Buttons - Blend jewelry to button texture and color, i.e. gold or silver. Do not repeat buttons as earrings.

- Pins - When the jacket has a lapel, try to follow the line of the lapel with a horizontal pin. Pins are placed on the base of the shoulder when wearing a collarless jacket.
- Extending - Need a longer necklace? Attach a bracelet to the back of a necklace to make it longer.
- Rings - Less is more. Limit your rings for business, one per hand.
- Pens - A beautiful pen makes a nice statement about you.
- Scarves - Long scarves can be worn around the neck; short scarves can be tied at the neck or tucked into the neckline.
- Purses - Your purse says more about you than you think. Just as with shoes, a quality purse (one of real leather) will enhance your total image. Carrying a large purse and a briefcase can project a disorganized look. The best solution is to have a small purse inside your briefcase or a small purse with a long strap.

SELECTING AND COMBINING SHOES, HOSE, AND HEMLINES

Basic Guidelines

- Good neutral shoe shades are black, navy and gray. For dark hair shades, shoes should be no lighter than your skin shade.
- Shoes must be same color as hemline or darker, never lighter.
- Hose must be same shade as shoes or lighter, never darker.

Avoid: Dark hemline, light hose and tight shoe (fashion look)
Dark hemline, light hose and dark shoe (too much contrast)
Light hemline, dark hose and light shoe (too much contrast)
Light hemline, light hose and dark shoe (fashion look)

| HEMLINE | HOSE | SHOES |
|--|--|--|
| Ivory or Light Color | Ivory or cream | Ivory or cream |
| Taupe | Taupe or light gray or beige | Taupe or gray or beige |
| Camel or Golden Brown | Beige or golden tone | Camel, brown or black |
| Brown | Sheer brown | Brown |
| Gray | Gray or medium taupe Or Gray or barely black | Gray Black |
| Navy | Sheer navy or gray Or Barely black | Navy Black |
| Black | Barely black or gray | Black |
| Red, Royal, Blue | Ivory.....Ivory CreamBone Taupe.....Taupe Gray.....Gray Barely black.....Black Ivory.....Black | |
| Purple, Burgundy, Dark Green, Mahogany, Rust, Teal | Sheer navy.....Navy Barely black.....Black Gray.....Black Skin tone, or one tone lighter than your skin color | Same color as hemline, or a shade darker |
| Prints in Medium Tones | Select a neutral color in the background and choose a matching shoe and hose color. Example: gray and yellow print, gray shoes and hose. | |

QUICK BUSINESS ETIQUETTE TIPS

Always do right; you will please some people, and astonish the rest.

-Mark Twain

- When seated, whether you are a man or a woman, rise to greet the person approaching you and extend a hand.
- Respect other people's space. Keep at least one arm's length away for appropriate conversational distance.
- When arriving for a meeting, present your business card to the receptionist for proper pronunciation of your name.
- In a business conversation, topics to avoid are politics, religion and age. The best policy is to avoid personal issues and stick to business and work-related subjects.
- In a dining situation, remember your bread plate is on the left and your beverage is on the right.
- Consensus in a meeting is best achieved by utilizing a round table seating arrangement.
- It is very important to introduce people by rank; i.e., the president would be introduced first, managers second, etc.
- When wearing a nametag, place it high on your right shoulder.

