

HOME ECONOMICS GUIDE



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Designs For You Part I

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What is the perfect feminine figure? Requirements change from time to time. It is not uncommon to find that today's ideal is tomorrow's ugly duckling.

Today's fashions are exercises in being different. Making clothes judgments, even for a woman with a sixth fashion sense, is not always easy. It takes more taste and imagination to look great today than it did when there was a formula for dressing.

A study of clothing design, which increases understanding of art principles, can also increase appreciation of

the visual richness of the surroundings.

Cecil Beaton said, "We all have enough of the peacock in us not to be able to dismiss it entirely. Those who disregard it completely are the losers, for they miss the delightful multiplicity and charm . . . that reflects our deepest psychological needs. He who ignores fashion ignores life itself."

The difficulty is in knowing how much is enough. The tried and true recipes for dressing appear to have lost their



impact, yet there are three elements which are indispensable in determining what one should wear. They are:

- **The group to which one belongs**

Most groups conform to a mode of dress which serves as a badge of identification. Policemen, soldiers, nurses and priests are among the professional groups that are identified by their dress. Students attending class are distinguishable from peers who are interviewing for a job. Conforming to reasonable group standards makes life more comfortable.

- **Personal status**

Status comes from a variety of sources and may vary with groups. In some instances it is not prudent to outdress the leader. We expect appearance to reflect position. Many were surprised when the President wore a sweater for a network program. Customs have changed but the unwritten dress code is still with us.

- **Personal characteristics**

Each individual has qualities that are unique. These qualities should be emphasized. Ralph Waldo Emerson had this in mind when he said: "Insist on yourself; never imitate." Clothes that hang in the back of the closet day after day are usually the ones that do not represent us. They are the mistakes that we are uncomfortable in. Timid or passive persons will be comfortable in conservative styles, subdued colors and curved lines. Confident or sophisticated persons will enjoy elegant and fashionable styles, sharp contrasts, strong colors, large unbroken areas and straight lines. Discovering

what ones qualities are and finding clothes that express those traits is time consuming but worth the effort.

Analyzing Costume Parts

Individual parts of a costume should look like they were designed for each other. Some people seem to sense the appropriateness of isolated costume parts. They know instinctively what blouse to buy for a particular skirt. Others need to ask four basic questions before making a purchase. These questions are:

- **Are the materials compatible?**

Materials may look coarse and rough, or fine and smooth. Generally rough materials look best when combined with other rough materials, and smooth materials are most pleasing when combined with similar surfaces. Extremes have little in common and do not combine successfully *unless* they are used for deliberate contrast. For example, buttons with a rough heavy look would not be a good choice for a smooth silk blazer.

The apparent bulk of the item should be considered. A heavy fur looks best when combined with a fabric that has body.

Softness should be compared to rigidity. For example ultra-suede combines best with fabrics that have a medium degree of pliancy. Thin, fluttery fabrics are not a good choice with leather.

The degree of elegance should be observed. It is possible to find velvet combined with denim and lace with burlap, but is this combination really pleasing? Contrast can be achieved without an obvious clash.

Ornamentation should be closely related to the design features in the garment. Do select feminine jewelry for soft costumes and reserve heavy or tailored pieces for garments with a sturdy look. Two or more fabric designs may be combined in one costume *if* they are of the same general nature and one design is dominant. For example two geometric designs combined are more pleasing than one geometric and one floral design.





Are the styles compatible?

- **Are the styles suitable for the same purpose?**

Consider the clothing budget before purchasing a formal gown. Suitable shoes and a bag are needed to complete the costume. If tailored shoes will be worn select a dress fashioned from a dressy but less fragile fabric.

- **Are the sizes compatible?**

Again avoid extremes. Bags, jewelry and other accessories should be in proportion. An oversized bag may be out of character for the wearer as well as the other accessories it is worn with.

- **Are the shapes related?**

We should be concerned with two areas—the silhouette as it relates to the shape of the body, and subordinate parts of the garment as they relate to lines used in the larger part.

Silhouette is the first shape others notice about total appearance. The lines of the silhouette should be in harmony with body lines.

A study of costume history shows that designers frequently exaggerate a natural curve, joint or a body part. The Gibson girl with broad shoulders and

pinched-in waist is a good example. Bustless, padded bosoms and shoes that taper to a sharp point have been endured for the sake of fashion and without regard for the harmony that can be created when clothes conform to the body shape.

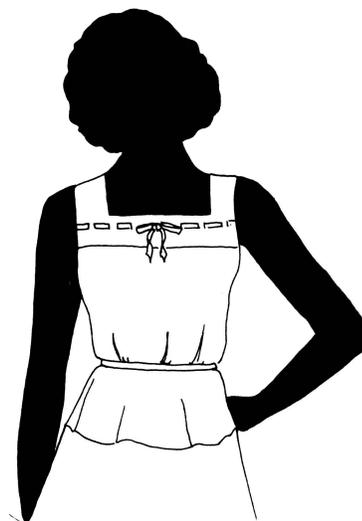
The woman who spends hours maintaining a slim, well-proportioned body should think twice before covering it with a fall of fabric that starts at the shoulders and conceals her trim waist. When the dress and the body shape are no longer a unit we visualize the shape of the dress and not that of the body. This practice should be followed only when it is desirable to camouflage a body part. Large hips or flat bosoms can be disguised, yet the amount of liberty that can be taken is debatable. Select clothing which makes the most of the figure.

The second consideration should be given to the small parts of a costume as they relate to the large part. Design lines and accessories should follow the lines of the garment. A rectangular bag will look best with a box jacket. Save the accessories with oval or rounded lines for a dressmaker style with curves. Trims should follow the general lines of the garment. The neckline should determine the line direction used in the garment. The three basic types of necklines are round, square, and v-shaped. The V-neckline gives an impression of greater length because it is longer and attracts more attention.

Remember that it is possible to have too much repetition. When this happens the center of interest is lost.



Round, square and v-shaped neckline.



Keep repetition to a minimum.

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