

HOME ECONOMICS GUIDE



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Clothing for the Large Woman

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One in every four women in the United States wears a size 16 or larger dress. Regardless of demand, clothing in large sizes is difficult to find in a wide price range. Clothing for this group frequently sacrifices fashion for comfort unless the consumer buys in the more expensive price range. Like most women, the large woman wants fashionable clothing with good fit, comfort and a reasonable price tag. All too often she must sacrifice one of these to get the other. Many times when fashionable clothing can be found it's not proportioned, from a design standpoint, for the large figure.

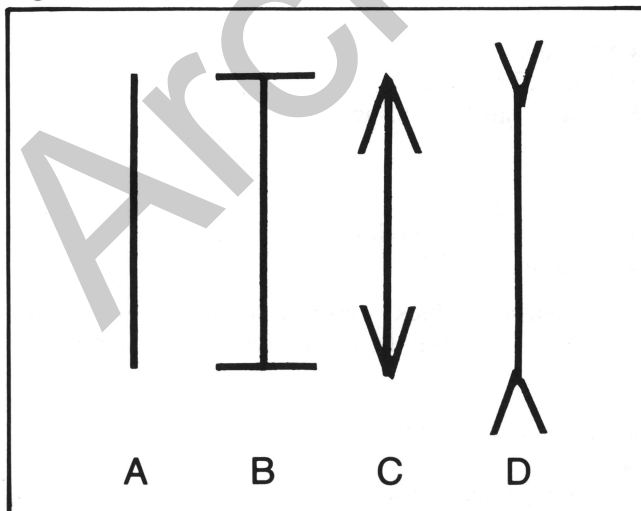
A large woman does not need to sacrifice style for fit and comfort if clothing sources exist. When choices are available the problem involves selection not availability. In this situation, there's a need for a basic understanding of design principles and how they apply to the large figure.

Lines and Illusions

A simple way to begin is to use optical illusion. Optical illusions are tricks played on the eye by the way



Figure 1



line is used. In an optical illusion, what the eye sees is not what exists. In Figure 1, line D appears the longest while line C appears the shortest. Actually all four lines are the same length.

When a large woman selects these lines in her clothing, she can create the illusion of being taller, shorter, thinner and, in some cases, wider.

Line B, the T line, stops the eye and then forces the eye to move back and forth at the point where the T intersects the vertical line. This can make the figure look shorter and wider. The T, properly placed, can be an advantage to a large woman. A T at the shoulder can balance large hips and draw attention to the top of the figure. Used at the waist or hip, the T line seldom flatters the large figure.

Line C forces the eye back to the center of the line. This shortens and widens the figure in the center. Dropped shoulders and raglan sleeves can create this effect.

Line D, the Y line, guides the eye up and out creating the illusion of height and thinness. Y lines are especially good because they lead the eye away from the larger areas.

The following are examples of different lines found in clothing:

T Lines in Clothing

Yokes
Waistlines
Hemlines
Horizontal rows of trim
Tiers or layers

Y Lines in Clothing

Lapels of coat or jacket
V-necklines
Neckline interest
V-shaped yokes
Sailor collars

↑Lines in Clothing

Raglan sleeves
↑Bodices
Dropped shoulder lines

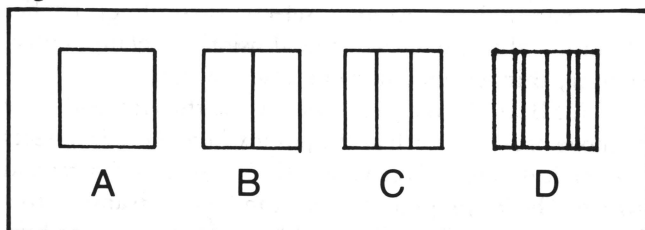
Diagonal Lines. The versatile diagonal line is useful for a large woman. The more vertical the diagonal, the taller and thinner the illusion. The diagonal, a traditional line in clothing, can smooth out figure defects such as prominent hips and derrieres.

Diagonal Lines in Clothing

Wrap tops or dresses
A-line skirts
Slightly gathered skirts
Slanted pockets
Bias cut skirts
Semi-full styles in dresses, tops and sleeves

Multiple Lines. Repeating lines can enhance or detract from the large figure. For example, vertical panels can divide the figure and give a slenderizing effect. Figure 2 is an example of vertical division.

Figure 2



A large unbroken area such as A seems larger than one with space divided into smaller areas. D has small, broken areas concentrated in the center of the figure. This makes the area appear smaller. Grouping lines into a unit also adds height.

Multiple Lines in Clothing

Princess styles
Irregular line prints
Panels in tops or dresses
Vertical stripes



Neckline interest draws attention to face and away from figure problems.

Special Design Features

Most women have figure faults, but a large woman often has several difficult-to-disguise figure problems. Among these are a thick waist, large hips, large bosom, large abdomen, or large arms. However, clothing with certain design features can deemphasize figure faults.

Select clothing designed with the following lines to help disguise large hips.

Select

- Soft curved lines
- Gored skirts
- Soft waistlines or no waistlines

Avoid

- Hip pockets on tops or pants
- Draped hips
- Excessive fullness or gathers
- Slim, fitted slacks or skirts

Although difficult to conceal, careful design selection can minimize a large bust. The following can help:

Select

- Soft collars
- V-shaped seaming
- Small, high V-necklines

Avoid

- Stripes or plaids
- Extremely severe styles
- Plunging necklines

Disguise a thick waist or abdomen by avoiding emphasis in the middle of the figure. For example:

Select

- Loose fitting clothing
- Princess lines
- Slightly bloused waistlines
- Medium weight fabrics



Soft, curved lines combined with slightly bloused waistline can conceal figure problems.

Avoid

- Sheer or clingy fabrics
- Belts
- Cinched in waistlines
- Hip length blouson tops

Large upper arms make it difficult to wear all sleeve types. Look for sleeves that provide some ease and comfort. For example:

Select

- Slightly gathered sleeves
- Raglan, cape or kimona sleeves
- Soft, moderately full sleeves

Avoid

- Sleeveless styles
- Fitted sleeves with a dart
- Cuffed short sleeves

Color and the Large Figure

Color influences clothing. Understanding the effect of color can help a large woman choose clothing. The three parts of color, hue, value and intensity, are vital to understanding and using color.

Hue is the actual name of the color such as red, blue, green. A hue can be warm or cool. The following examples are a good way to remember and categorize hues.

A fire provides warmth. Red, yellow and orange are associated with a fire and are warm colors. They make the figure seem to advance and appear larger.

A shaded woods creates a vision of coolness. Blues, greens and purples associated with this scene are cool colors. Cool colors make the figure seem to recede and appear smaller.

In general, red (a warm color) will make a large woman appear larger than will blue (a cool color).

Value also affects how a color looks on the figure. The darkness or lightness of a color affects its value. If white is added, the color becomes lighter and is called a tint. Tints make the figure appear larger.

Add black to a color and it becomes a shade of the true color. Shades absorb light and make the figure appear smaller.

If you add white to blue it becomes powder blue. This is a tint. Add black and the blue becomes navy. Navy is a shade of blue. Logic tells us that navy, a shade, makes a large woman appear smaller than powder blue, a tint.

Intensity of a color creates an illusion of size. Bright or intense colors reflect light and increase size. Dull or neutralized colors absorb light and decrease size.

Graying a color makes it dull and thus reduces the apparent size of the wearer. A grayed blue such as steel blue is more flattering to a large woman than royal blue which is a bright blue.

Color Selection. Nonetheless, a large woman need not confine her color choices to a few dark colors. Dull or grayed colors are not necessarily uninteresting. Learning to choose between hues and varying their value and intensity is a way to create interest. By varying the value and intensity of colors, large women can wear some form of almost every hue.

Color has infinite variety; therefore, it's difficult to set rules that always apply. Generalizations such as "all warm colors enlarge" or "all shades decrease apparent size" don't always hold true. For example: rust, a reddish brown, is considered a warm color. Peach, a light reddish yellow, is also a warm color. Yet, rust, because of its dark value and low intensity, is more flattering to the large figure than peach.

These following guidelines help the large woman use color to advantage.

- Select warm colors in dark values and grayed intensities.
- Select cool colors that are grayed.
- Wear grayed colors instead of bright colors.
- Choose monochromatic or one hue color schemes and vary the value and intensity.



Caped sleeves provide comfort and disguise upper arms.

- Use bright, intense colors in small amounts.
- Avoid color changes at hip or waist.
- Avoid large amounts of dark, unrelieved color.

Fabrics

The fabric a large woman selects for her clothing is as important as the line, color or special design features. If a large woman selects a Y line to create an illusion of height and a grayed slate blue to decrease apparent size, she can still defeat her purpose by choosing a jersey fabric. The clingy fabric reveals exactly what she wants to conceal.

Fabrics have a character of their own. This affects how they appear on the large figure. Some are soft and clingy; others rough and stiff. Use the following guidelines to select fabric.

Select fabrics that are:

- Short, close nap
- Opaque
- Limited in texture
- Medium weight
- Firmly woven or texturized stretch
- Medium hand

Avoid fabrics that are:

- Clingy or mold the body
- Heavy or bulky
- Extremely stiff
- Stretchy knits
- Transparent, sheer or shiny

Patterns and Prints

Fabric design is important to the large figure. Moderation is the key to selecting patterns. Extremely large patterns are startling on the large figure and emphasize size. Tiny prints seem diminutive and emphasize the contrast between the size of the wearer and the print. Choose moderately scaled florals or prints for the most flattering look.



Simple lines, a splash of color and a smooth textured fabric combine to create harmony.

Choose stripes only if they are unequally spaced and if they create a vertical emphasis. Stripes can add height but usually add width as well.

Geometric patterns, to give a vertical illusion, should be moderate in size and randomly arranged. Use caution when selecting geometrics for the large figure.

Harmony

Harmony is the art of putting together line, fabric, texture and color to create a pleasing appearance. A large woman needs to have the idea of harmony in mind when selecting her clothing.

These basic guidelines for pulling a look together may help:

- Use similarity of line, color and texture to create interest.

All clothing elements should fit together. If one feature dominates the others, harmony is destroyed.

- Emphasize the good; camouflage the poor. Create a flattering center of interest by using a different color, unusual shape, special decoration or line elements of design to draw attention to the good points.

- Avoid fashion extremes. Extreme styles or high fashion looks are seldom flattering to the large figure. Moderate tight skirts, plunging necklines or any extreme to flatter the figure.

- Experiment with color. Learn which colors and color combinations are the most flattering.

A large woman can apply design principles to create a pleasing look and, at the same time, gain confidence and self assurance.