

Wardrobe strategies: Fit, style are more important than size

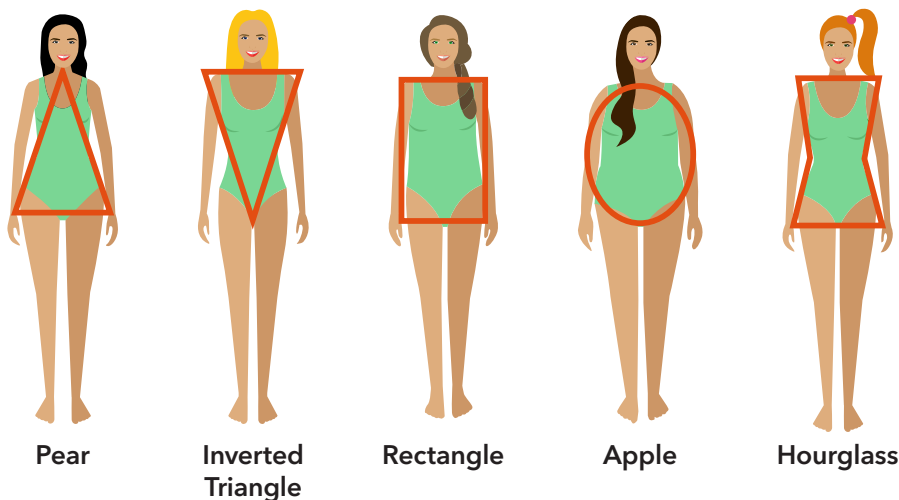
Modern clothing has been part of our lives for hundreds of years. Scientific research shows clothing might even date to more than 83,000 years ago. Clothing is a multipurpose necessity that protects us from extreme temperatures or keeps us dry when it rains. It also allows us to follow the cultural norms of covering parts of our bodies or dressing in accordance with local customs. Our clothing choices play a large role in nonverbal communication, too. What we choose to wear, including how it looks on our bodies, can affect others' thoughts about us or even how we feel about ourselves.

Clothing choices can be complicated because there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We all have different body types combined with differing heights and weights or even genetic traits. This explains why the same outfit may look entirely different when different people wear it. Therefore, we ought to focus on clothing that looks good on us, not someone else. As much as we may love a particular clothing style or trend, sometimes it may not be the best choice for our body type. Body types are based on how the proportions of our shoulders, chest, waist (or middle), and hips relate to each other. Clothing with an ideal fit and style can emphasize parts of our figure that we like or camouflage parts of our figure that we dislike.

Below are some examples of “common” body types and clothing styles to choose or avoid based on body type. Of course, some may think that our clothing should only make us look good, but don't forget to make sure you feel good, too. Someone can tell you that you look great in a particular outfit, and even if the style is one that is supposed to flatter your body type, you may not feel like you look great. Ultimately, no matter what the style looks like, or what you look like in the style, choose clothing that makes you smile every time you wear it. Happy people look great, no matter what they are wearing.

The **Pear Shape** body type has shoulders and a chest area that are smaller than the hip area. To balance these proportions, choose styles that emphasize the shoulder and neckline such as boat neck tops or shirts

Common shapes of body types



with full sleeves. Bottoms should be simple, darker, and even slim-fitting. Avoid garments that accentuate the hips, including pants with pleats. Petite people (5'2" and under) should choose tops and bottoms with the same fabric in order to create a vertical, lengthening effect.

The **Inverted Triangle Shape** body type is defined by a larger bust and not much definition in the waist area. Give emphasis to the hip area with pocket details, and shirts with v-neck collars are ideal for drawing the eye downward. Choose lighter colored pants or skirts to add dimension.

Both the **Rectangular Shape** and **Apple Shape** body types are known for having a rounder or protruding midsection. Selecting garments with center-front seams or layered separates, such as a cardigan, is a good idea. Define the waist with belts, when appropriate, and balance it with boot cut jeans. However, avoid boxy garments because they call too much attention to the waist.

The **Hourglass Shape** body type is sometimes referred to as “curvy,” and is well-balanced with a waist that is smaller than both the shoulders and hips. Emphasize the waist with tailored jackets or wrap dresses. Clothing that skims but does not cling to the body can flatter. Avoid bulky, shapeless garments that may accentuate the shoulders and hips too much.

Wardrobe Wisdom: No matter what style or type of clothing you choose, try to select clothing and accessories made with well-assembled, quality materials. Sometimes our budgets prevent us from buying the best, and that is OK. If possible, opt for quality over quantity. You may be better off with two or three nice T-shirts that fit well, as opposed to seven or eight T-shirts that are worn out.

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