



# wardrobe STRATEGIES

## *Everyone Isn't a Size 9!*

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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. Figure flattery is the name of the game; the rules of the game are wardrobe strategies. A winning appearance is a cinch if you know how to play this exciting image game.

## 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. According to recent statistics, approximately 62 percent of females wear a size 12 or larger. By the year 2000, this percentage will most likely be larger.

More and more positive attention is being given the plus-size (16 and above) segment of our population. Designers, manufacturers, department stores and pattern companies are recognizing the needs and desires of these individuals to have beautiful, flattering clothes. Big can be beautiful!

Looking and feeling beautiful begins with recognizing, understand-

ing 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. On the other hand, every individual, regardless of size and shape, must give attention to these design principles to achieve a successful appearance.

Garment size is not the issue — body image is! Carol Shaw, editor in chief of BBW, says,

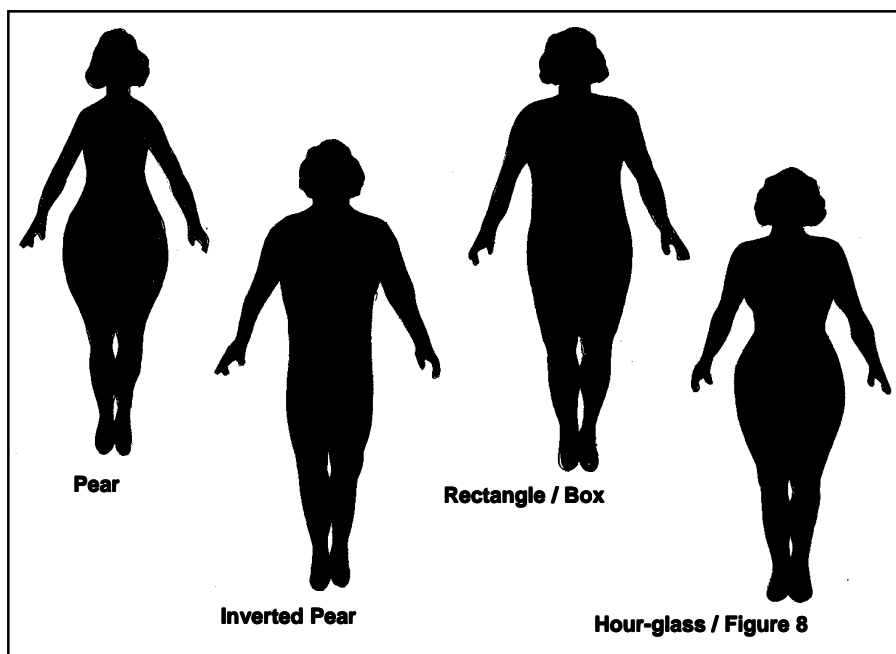
*"You are who you are, and your dress size has nothing to do with your success or failure as a person."*

However, image is important to successful people. It is critical to how we relate to one another. And clothing is the packaging or wrap-

ping used to visually present and communicate image to others. Each of us can benefit from learning ways to manipulate our "real" image to create an illusion of the "ideal" image.

## 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/box, and hour-glass/figure 8.



■ **Pear** - This individual has a narrow shoulder area and often a narrow waistline. The hipline is full and rounded, making the waistline appear small in comparison. Many individuals have small bustlines.

*General Clothing Strategy:* This shape presents the most challenges, requiring careful attention to proportion. The individual must choose styles that will give the illusion of more even proportions between the top and the bottom torso.

■ **Inverted Pear** - The upper torso seems to be shorter and broader, giving way to a short-waisted appearance. The body appears top-heavy since shoulders are usually broad, bustline full and hips smaller than upper body. Waistline and mid-area may be thick.

*General Clothing Strategy:* The challenge is to balance the bottom torso with the top. Focus attention upward toward the face without drawing attention to the bustline. Use horizontal lines or emphasis at the hipline or the low-hipline to balance the figure. Avoid garments with a natural waistline or with features that draw attention to the waistline or bustline.

■ **Rectangle/Box** - The body appears to be rectangular or box-like. Shoulders and hips are approximately the same width with little or no indentation at waist. Bustline may be small or flat.

*General Clothing Strategy:* The challenge is to camouflage the overall stocky appearance. Create the illusion of vertical lines from head to toe. Avoid anything that will cut the body into parts horizontally.

■ **Hour-glass/Figure 8** - This is considered to be the most perfectly proportioned shape. The shoulders are as broad or slightly broader than the hips, the bustline is naturally rounded, with a well-defined waistline and proportioned hipline.

*General Clothing Strategy:* Most clothing styles can be worn,

depending on the size and dimension of other body parts, such as arms, legs, etc. Be sure to take into consideration general body height (tall or short).

Full-figured shapes have the same height proportions as others by being either tall, average or petite. Likewise, various parts of the body, such as arms or neck, may be long, short, average, heavy or slim. All of these factors play a part in body analysis and image dressing.

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, 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:*

1. **understanding your body and**
2. **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

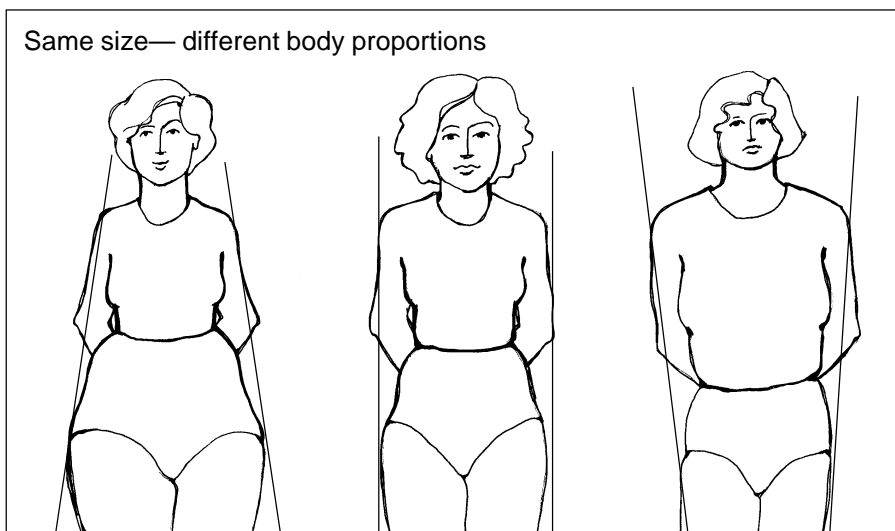
textures must be in good balance and proportion with sufficient rhythm and emphasis to create harmony with one another and with the individual. It’s really not as complicated as it sounds!

## Fashion & You

Seasonal fashion trends play a key role, but they also tend to complicate the situation by adding yet another player to the stage. Each fashion season highlights specific colors, silhouettes, designs and fabric textures. The need for something new and the desire to be “in fashion” can sometimes lead to wardrobe shopping dilemmas.

Image-conscious consumers learn to recognize the importance of carefully evaluating the season’s offerings and choosing according to figure/body type. Individuals with a keen eye for fashion will also identify apparel that can be changed or adapted with minimal expense or time. The addition of a jacket or a splash of color using the right accessory can do wonders for a so-so outfit or image.

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. Take these three individuals described below. Each will try on the same size, same style garment, but only one will achieve that “great, well-proportioned look”!



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 garment fit has ease, tucks and/or darts in the correct locations to allow the fabric to contour, drape or skim over the body. Good fit has flattering proportions in scale with the body. Good fit is not only flattering to the figure, but 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, hour-glass). 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. This is 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 clothing through figure flattery techniques, 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 Home Economics Agent.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# BODY ANALYSIS — Work Sheet

*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).

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## Body Type: *(refer to publication)*

Pear     Inverted Pear     Rectangle     Figure 8

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### ■ 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 size)
- Average (B-cup size)
- Full (C-cup size)
- Very full (D or above cup size)

### ■ 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 Location:

- 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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