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EC56-410 Foundation Garments : Selection, Fitting, Care

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Foundation Garments

○ — selection

○ — fitting

○ — care



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Foundation Garments

by Helen Rocke

Foundation garments are a basic part of every woman's wardrobe. No other garment she wears is so important to her health, comfort and appearance.

A foundation garment is any garment that supports or controls a woman's figure. Sometimes the term is associated only with corselets or corsets, but it covers many other types of garments as girdles, panty girdles, garter belts, and brasieres.

Rightly fitted foundation garments will improve any woman's proportions and provide the firm smooth lines required to make clothes fit well and look their best.

Good foundation garments remind her to stand straight and tall and maintain a better posture. Better posture results in better functioning of the body organs, eases strain on the back and lessens weariness or fatigue.

Foundation garments of today are designed to give support, control, restraint, or a combination of the three. Those for the mature woman must restrain the flesh and act as a supplement to muscles losing their tone. Doctors advise that a girl

begin to wear a girdle and bra as her figure develops, both for the support they offer at the time, and to prevent posture problems in later years.

Modern garments are styled for an active life and are designed to be worn for work and dress. Tasks that require stooping, bending, lifting and reaching also require figure support to prevent muscle strain. So it is advisable to wear foundation garments for everyday activities and not think of them mainly as "dress up" items.

Authorities tell us there is no need to worry about becoming over dependent upon a girdle for figure restraint. This happens only to the woman who gets no exercise at all, and that disqualifies any busy homemaker.

Foundation garments are directly related to fashion. Designers of outer apparel expect their dresses and suits to be worn over such garments. Fashions in foundation garments change with the silhouettes of ready-to-wear but certain relationships always exist. For example, a straight slim skirt requires a more controlling girdle than does a full skirt, and a fitted bodice requires more diaphragm control than a blouse.

Selection

FIGURE TYPES

The foundation garment or combination of garments you will choose to wear is a matter of figure type, personal preference, your activities and the clothes you will be wearing with the garments.

Aside from the not yet developed teen-age figure there are three basic figure types; junior, average, full.

Junior - firm flesh, good muscle tone - high, well separated breasts - small waist, hips full in proportion to waist - (age may vary from teenager to older woman whose figure has retained its junior characteristics). Figure needs molding, possibly some control.

Average - flesh not as firm as junior. Fully developed bust, firm or tending toward softness. Mature waist with tendency toward "a roll" at waistline - curved hips - need molding and control. May require diaphragm control and uplift in bra. Average figures are in the majority and the largest number of foundation garments are developed for this type.

Full - this is the figure with generous measurements; ample bustline, waist more or less undefined and hips and thighs inclined to weight. The size may be due to large frame or excess flesh.

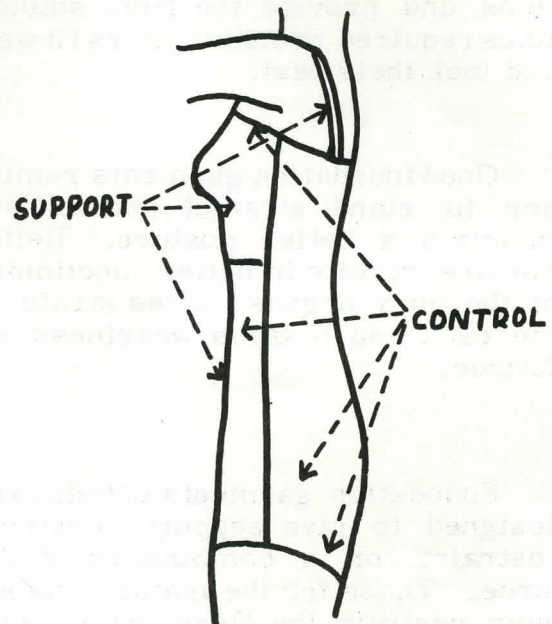
The well proportioned figure with large frame requires garments that smooth the figure, give support and uplift.

The large fleshy figure requires more controlling garments to redistribute the flesh and support abdomen and bust.

Variations in figure types also influence the choice of a garment. In each of the basic types there are figures with variations in body length, above and below the waist.

Body shapes differ. They may be oval or round. The oval figure is broad from side to side, but narrow from back to front. The round figure is narrow from side to side, but deep from back to front. A round figure requires a different style bra than the oval figure.

Figures are also classified according to hip development (ratio between waist and hip measurement). If the difference between waist and hip measurement is less than 8", the figure is classified as a straight hip type. Eight to 10" is average. Over 10" is listed as full hip type.



Parts of the figure which need the support and control given by correctly fitted foundation garments.

TYPES OF GARMENTS

A few general suggestions as to types of garments and what they will do for figure needs follow:

Brassieres

Bandeau - has no band, or only a very narrow one below bust cups. Designed for junior figures and gives little underbust support.

Brassiere - with band under bust cups, designed for average bustline. Gives support and uplift.

Long-line- molds and controls bust, and also controls diaphragm flesh. Gives a trim look to waistline and area above waistline.

Strapless - supports from below and relieves shoulders from strain. First designed for summer and evening wardrobes, but now preferred by many women for all occasions.

Maternity - designed to give the nursing mother correct bust support, and adequate protection for all her activities.

Padded - helps girls or women with small or underdeveloped breasts to have a more graceful, better proportioned figure.

Girdles - Corselets - Corsets

Two-way stretch girdle - garment of knitted elastic with no openings or bones - molds and refines the figure and gives gentle support.

Panty girdle - knitted elastic with leg sections. Gives moderate figure control.

Girdle with some boning - front panel of cloth, elasticized sides and back panels. Gives firm control.

Girdle with boning front and back - elasticized sections, or double or set in panels at sides for extra hip control. Supplies extra firm support and control.

One piece corselet - for smooth over all control. Most satisfactory when bust, waist, and hip measurements of figure are in proportion.

Bra-lette - a strapless, hip-length bra with garters, for figures where hips are no problem.

Garment with inner belt - double front gives a strong lift. For figure with large abdomen.

Corsets - boned and laced for extra firm support, plus adaptability. Front lacing suggested if abdomen is large in proportion to waist, and the back needs relief from strain.

FACTORS AFFECTING COST

The cost of foundation garments is affected by the sizing, construction, bindings, finishing, fabric and fashion. Sometimes high fashion features such as special fabrics, embroidery, lace, special design and extra trim add considerably to the cost. It is best to check garments carefully in order to receive greatest satisfaction for money spent.

Fitting

Comfort is the first requisite for a girdle, corselet or bra. The trend each year is toward lighter and prettier garments using elastic, cut, and seaming to give control rather than stays or bones and heavy fabrics.

A garment is not comfortable unless it fits properly so be sure a foundation garment is correctly and comfortably fitted before deciding to buy it. It is said women are more likely to wear ill-fitting brassieres than wrongly fitted girdles because of the tendency to purchase without fitting.

If you are buying the same style you bought last time, or if you are positive about your size, you can select a bra without being fitted. But figures do change and manufacturers are constantly bringing out new styles. When the services of a fitter are available it is best to take advantage of them.

Brassieres are fitted by two measurements, size and cup. Size is stated in even numbers from 28 to 54.

Cups are designated by letter "A" for the small, "B" for average, "C" for full, and "D" for the very full bust.

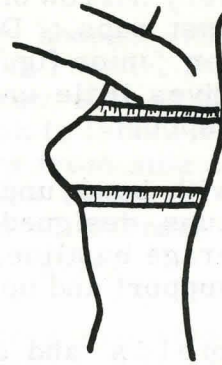
Measurement is taken in different ways. The method most often used is:

1. Take a snug measurement around the body just under the bust, and add five inches. If the sum is an odd number add one. This is your bra size.

2. Measure the chest above the breast. The difference between this measurement and the first one taken indicates cup size. A difference of:

- 1 inch indicates "A" cup
- 2 inches indicates "B" cup
- 3 inches indicates "C" cup
- More than 3 inches indicates "D" cup.

These measurements are a guide in choosing the size, but trying it on is the surest way to find a good fitting bra. Garments are made in different styles and those made by different manufacturers vary in cut and design.



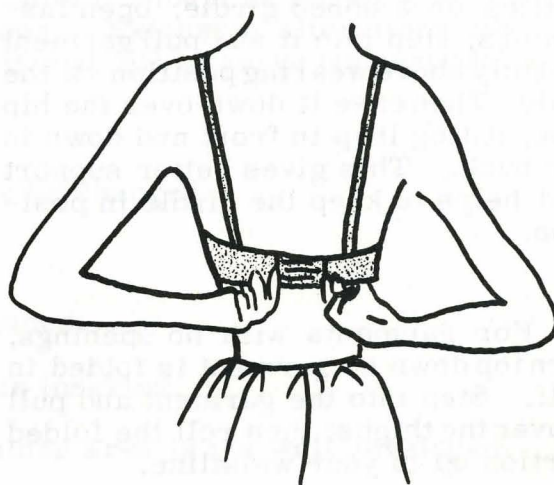
The illustration shows position of the tape in taking measurements. Measurements for foundation garments will be more accurate if taken from the side so the position of the tape can be checked.

TESTS FOR A CORRECTLY FITTED BRA

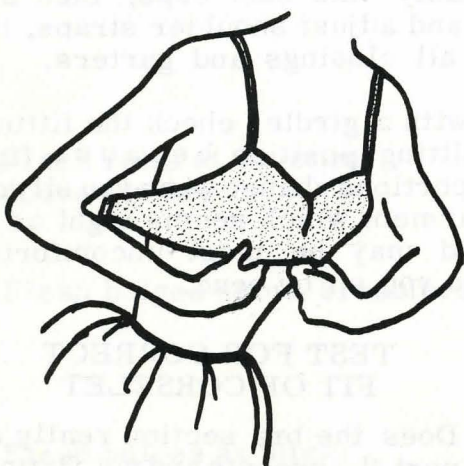
1. Does the band under the bust fit snugly but not too tightly?
2. Are the cups deep enough and widely enough spaced so they shape and support the breasts without crowding?
3. Does the band across the back fit smoothly and snugly without causing a bulge of flesh above or below?
4. Does the garment allow easy movement and easy breathing?
5. Are the straps comfortable and easily adjustable?
6. Does the bra stay in place when the arms are lifted?



1. Place straps over the shoulders. Holding the bra at the bottom, lean forward from the waist to fit the breasts into the cups.



3. After bra is hooked run finger under band at back to smooth garment. Adjust shoulder straps for comfort. Wrong adjustment of straps can ruin the fit of an otherwise correctly fitted bra.



2. Slide hands to back still holding the fabric. Straighten up and hook at back.

When fitting girdles and corselets always fit the fullest part of the body. Girdles with zipper, or hooks and zipper are sized by waist measurement, from 26" to 40". Some are made to fit figures with different hip development. Lengths also vary to suit figure types. Be sure to choose a girdle which is long enough so that you can "sit into" it comfortably. One of the most common mistakes in buying girdles is to get them too short.

These are the measurements taken in selecting a girdle:

1. Waist - to determine the size.
2. Hip - over fullest part - to determine hip development.
3. Waist to below thick part of thigh - to determine length.

HOW TO PUT ON A GIRDLE

A girdle will not fit as it should unless put on in the right way. When putting on a boned girdle, open fastenings, step into it and pull garment slightly above wearing position on the body. Then ease it down over the hip line, fitting it up in front and down in the back. This gives better support and helps to keep the girdle in position.

For garments with no openings, turn top down so garment is folded in half. Step into the garment and pull it over the thighs; then roll the folded portion up to your waistline.

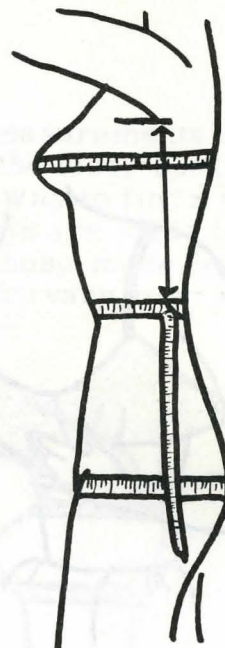
Garters help hold a girdle or corselet in place, so all garters should be fastened. They should hang straight when attached to the hose. Bend the knees slightly as they are fastened in order to avoid strain on the hose.

TEST FOR CORRECT FIT OF GIRDLE

1. Does the garment offer enough support for the abdomen?
2. Is it high enough at the waistline, and long enough over the thighs to control the flesh without causing a roll?
3. Are the bones of correct length and placed so they curve with and not into the body?
4. Can you walk, sit, bend comfortably?

When selecting corselets, five measurements are taken:

1. Fullest part of the bust - to determine size.
2. Waistline - to help determine figure type.
3. Fullest part of hips.
4. Length from underarm to waist - determine if you need half size.
5. Waist to thigh.



Position of tape for taking measurements for girdles and corselets. Length from underarm to waist is taken at the back where arm joins the body.

HOW TO PUT ON A CORSELET

Open all fastenings then step into it. Pull the garment up over the hips, straighten it on the figure, then adjust waist and hip section.

Bend forward so breasts fit comfortably into bust cups, then stand tall and adjust shoulder straps. Fasten all closings and garters.

As with a girdle, check the fitting in a sitting position because figure proportions change when you sit down. A garment which seems right as you stand may be most uncomfortable when you sit or bend.

TEST FOR CORRECT FIT OF CORSELET

1. Does the bra section really support the breasts and not flatten or pull downward?
2. Is the back flesh controlled so there is no roll above the garment?
3. Does the waistline fit snugly?
4. Is the skirt long enough to "sit into" comfortably?
5. Do the bones, if any, curve with the body?
6. Can you walk, sit, bend easily?

ALTERATIONS

With the wide variety of garments available it should be possible to find one that fits the figure with few alterations. Extensive alterations may change the garment's design so much that it will fail to serve its purpose.

Possible alterations are:

1. Supporters - position or length may be changed.
2. Shoulder straps may be changed.
3. Bones or stays shortened or lengthened.
4. Darts at waistline or elastic gussets inserted.
5. Darts at underarm if bust and shoulder area is not well developed.

ANALYSIS OF SOME COMMON FITTING PROBLEMS

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
Garment rides up. Need felt to pull it down.	Choose a garment with larger hip measurement. Length from waist to thigh may be too short. Be sure hose supporters are correctly adjusted. Length of hose is important in properly anchoring a garment.
Flesh rolls at waistline above girdle.	Try all-in-one foundation or girdle with larger waist measurement. A longer line brassiere may help.
Flesh bulges above brassiere.	Garment is probably too tight and may not be the right style. Built-up shoulder may help. Also an elastic inset, and higher cut back.
Flesh bulges at thigh.	Garment is too short. Choose a longer garment with larger hip measurement.
Boning cuts flesh.	Style may be incorrect. Boning may be too long or garment too tight at waistline or hips.
Shoulder straps cut flesh.	Longer straps with elastic may help. Straps may be padded.

Care

Care of foundation garments begins with the way they are handled in putting them on and in removing them. Avoid tugging, straining or gripping them with the fingernails. Sharp nails can cut through elastic or fabric and cause breaks in the garment.

In hot weather a dusting of bath or talcum powder will help in slipping on a garment. If a girdle has a placket, keep the bottom hook closed if possible while pulling it onto avoid tearing the end of the placket.

Take-off techniques also affect the serviceability. Roll a knitted girdle or pantie girdle down to the fullest part of body, then push it off. To avoid warping the bones of boned garments, never remove by turning them inside out. Loosen the fastenings, place the hands inside the top at the back, bend forward and push the girdle down.

MENDING

Repair kits for foundation garments are available at notion counters. They may include replacements for worn straps, elastic, garters and back straps for bras.

Make repairs quickly so small holes and tears don't become difficult mending problems. Machine mending is durable and quick for many places. A machine which makes a zig zag stitch is ideal to mend tears in elasticized garments.

LAUNDERING

Foundation garments need to be laundered often to keep them free of body oil and perspiration. Both these tend to weaken fiber and shorten the life of even the most carefully made garment.

Close the zipper or other fastening of the garment, soak a few minutes in cool water, then put in a suds of mild soap and warm water. Some detergents have a deteriorating effect on elastic so it is safer to use soap for any garments with elastic or elasticized sections. A soft brush or a turkish towel with suds applied to it may be used on badly soiled places.

Rinse thoroughly, roll in a bath towel to absorb moisture. Remove from towel, shape the garment and hang away from direct heat and sunlight to dry. The shape of garments is better retained if they are hung double over a rack or rod rather than suspended by straps or supporters.

Manufacturers recommend hand washing, but many women do launder lightly boned and elastic garments in automatic washers. If you choose this method, use the coolest setting on the machine and make sure zippers and other fastenings of the garment are closed. Putting the foundation garment into a net bag is another precaution for machine washing.

When garments are dry the fabric sections may be pressed with a warm iron. Fabrics of acetate, nylon and Dacron are damaged by a hot iron. Lace is ironed on the wrong side and in the direction of the seams. Shape the cups of bras by folding lengthwise and press toward the center. Never iron elastic or elasticized fabric.

Most elasticized fabrics have a tendency to discolor after the garment has been worn and laundered a number of times. Some become gray, others yellow or pink. Discoloration may be due to action of body acids, atmospheric fumes and sometimes to improper laundering. Manufacturers are working to find a solution to the problem.

 *
 * The secret of a good figure is good proportion. A good *
 * figure means head erect, chest high, shoulders flat, abdomen *
 * flat, hips smooth and firm, breasts firm and round, back *
 * straight and spine curved at the waist. *
 *
 *
 * Good fitting foundation garments can help you to attain a *
 * good figure but foundation garments alone will not produce a *
 * new figure. If your posture is poor your figure will not appear *
 * at its best until posture is improved. Essentials for good *
 * posture that can be practiced as you go about your daily life *
 * are: *
 *
 * Head erect Abdomen flat *
 * Chin in Lower back flat *
 * Chest high Legs straight *
 * Shoulders level Feet parallel *
 *
 * Watch your posture, eat wisely, and choose the right foun- *
 * dation for your type if you wish your figure to look its best. *
 *
 * *****

MARKS OF A WELL MADE GARMENT

Seams strong, securely stitched and well finished.

Short machine stitches.

Zigzag stitching on elasticized sections.

Bindings of good quality and firmly applied.

Adjustable shoulder straps, made of self material or ribbon which will not roll.

Adjustable closing for bras - at least two rows of fasteners.

Straps securely attached, inserted between fabric and inner taping, smooth finish.

Garters securely attached and reinforced where attached.