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EC60-421 Guides to Buying Women's Ready Made Dresses

Anna Marie Kreifels

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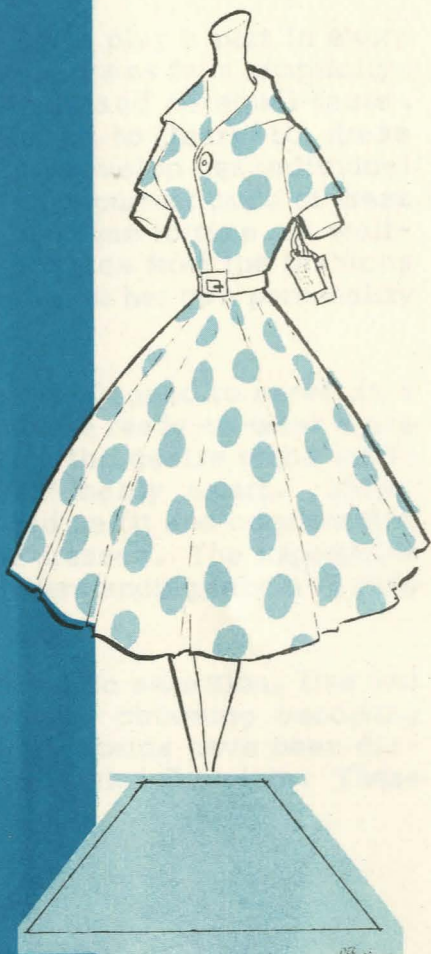
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Guides to
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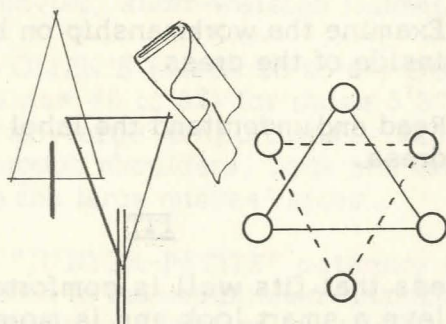
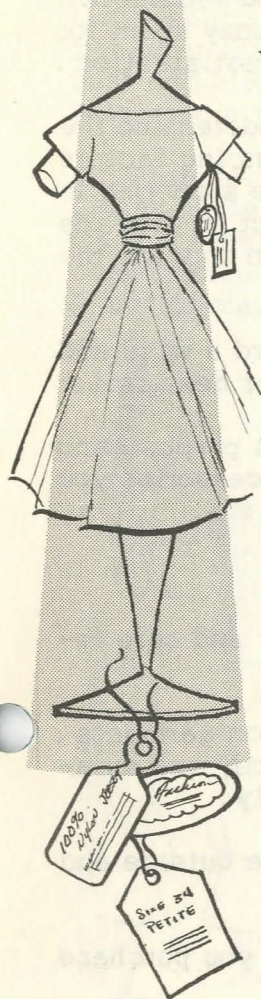
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Introduction

Fashion and style play a part in every woman's life. Style stems from simplicity, harmony, proportion and personal taste. Every woman wants to learn to dress attractively and to develop her individual style. Fashion is the current mode of dress and it changes from time to time. A well-dressed woman chooses from the fashions those that are suited to her own personality and figure.

This circular is planned to serve as a guide to selecting the ready-to-wear dress which will satisfy the desire to be well-dressed and fashionably smart. Major emphasis is placed on fit and construction of ready-to-wear dresses. The importance of reading and understanding labels is also stressed.

The topics of fabric selection, line and design in garments, choosing becoming colors and care of fabrics have been discussed in other Extension Circulars. These are listed on page 11.



Guides to Buying Women's Ready Made Dresses

ANNA MARIE KREIFELS
Extension Specialist in Clothing

Women have a natural desire to be well dressed. Equally important is their aim to get quality and satisfaction for the money they spend. Therefore, the money spent for dresses pays for appearance, quality and satisfaction.

Your budget and personal sense of value determine the amount you pay for a dress. Other influencing factors might be the community in which you live, the activities in which you participate, the care you expect to give the dress, and the number of seasons you plan to wear the dress.

These simple rules will guide you toward a wise and satisfying purchase when you shop for your next dress:

1. Decide your need for the dress, its purpose and its place in your wardrobe. Consider accessories you own or those you will need to purchase.
2. Select a becoming style and color.
3. Select a fabric which will meet wear and care requirements.
4. Try the dress over proper foundation garments. Good fit means comfort, neat appearance, and durability. Therefore, fit the dress carefully.
5. Examine the workmanship on both the outside and the inside of the dress.
6. Read and understand the label before you purchase the dress.

FIT

A dress that fits well is comfortable to wear, helps you achieve a smart look and is more durable. Choose a size that fits properly or needs only minor alterations.

There is a wide variation in sizing of ready-to-wear dresses because garment manufacturers have not yet agreed on a standard set of measurements. Selecting the dress by size, without trying it for fit, is a poor shopping practice.

The style of the dress can influence the size which fits most satisfactorily. When buying a dress styled with a full skirt and considerable ease in the bodice, the waist measurement might determine the size which fits best. The bust and hip measurements are of major importance when selecting a sheath or fitted style dress.

Manufacturers use various classifications for categories to designate figure types for which dresses are made. Most stores carry dresses in each category, but some stores will not carry the complete size range in each. A list of classifications and possible size ranges in each:



JUNIOR (sizes 5 to 15) for those 5'2" to 5'6" tall, regardless of age.



MISSES (sizes 8 to 20) for those 5'5" to 5'9" tall with slim to medium full figure and normal waistline.



PETITE (sizes 8 to 18) also called "diminutive" for short, slim women under 5'5".



TALL (sizes 8 to 20) for those 5'9" or taller.

HALF-SIZE (sizes 12 1/2 to 26 1/2) for heavier, short-waisted figures.



WOMEN'S (sizes 18 to 44) **OUT-SIZES** (sizes 46 to 52) for those 5'5" to 5'9" with large proportions. More ease through shoulders, back and waist than in the large misses' sizes.

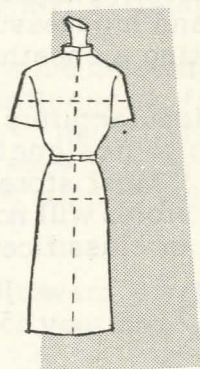
A "JUNIOR-PETITE" category is being added to the established classifications. These dresses are for the junior size girl or woman who is under 5'2" tall.

These classifications are based on size only. Your age does not determine the classification which will fit you best. Try various sizes in several classifications before you make the final purchase. This may in many cases eliminate the need for even minor alterations.

For a good fit try the dress over the foundation garment you expect to wear with the dress, and check these points:

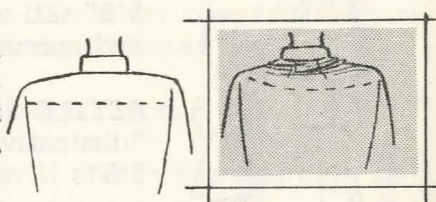
Grainline -

Each piece of the dress must be cut on straight grain of fabric. Lengthwise grain at center front and center back should be perpendicular to the floor. Crosswise grain at bust, hip and across the sleeve cap should be parallel to the floor. Variation in the grainline might be due to the design of the dress.



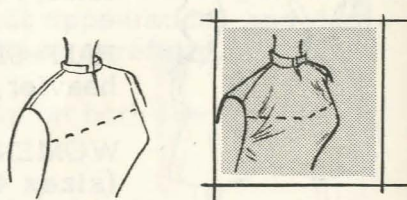
Neckline -

Collar and neckline should fit snugly across back of the neck, at the shoulder and at the front curve of the neck. Neckline should not ride up or fall away at the neck. Fit should be smooth and free from wrinkles.



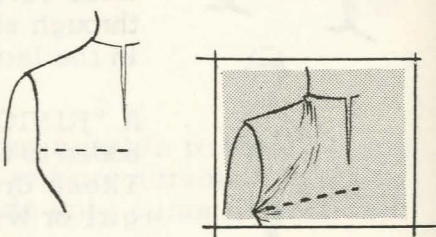
Shoulders -

Shoulder seam should extend straight from the neck to the highest point of the shoulder.

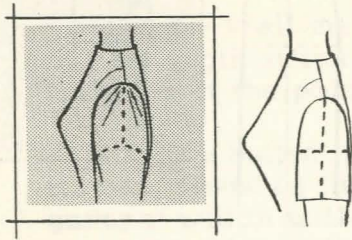


Armscye Line -

The set-in sleeve seam should follow the line where the arm joins the body. It curves from the high point of the shoulder, under the arm so as to fit comfortably without being baggy or hin-

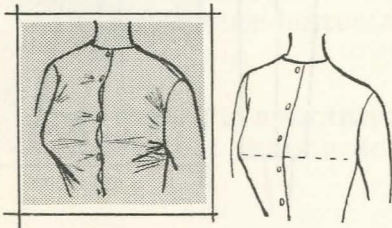


dering arm movement. Test by moving arms forward and backward.



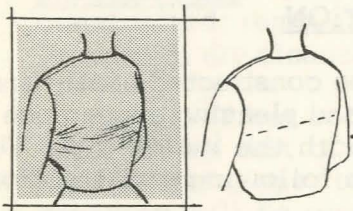
Sleeves -

There must be sufficient ease, evenly distributed over sleeve cap to allow for comfort and movement. The sleeve should hang straight from the highest point of the shoulder without wrinkles. Elbow darts or ease should be at the bend of the elbow. Test by reaching and by bending arms.



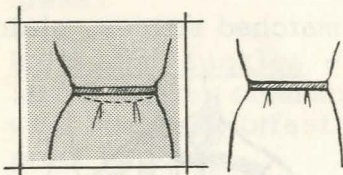
Bust -

Fit across the bust should be comfortable -- neither too loose nor too tight. The normal ease allowance is from 2 to 4 inches, but it may differ according to the design of the garment.



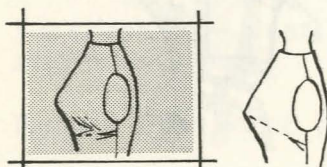
Waist Back -

Ease between the shoulder blades must be sufficient to allow for free movement. Test by reaching.



Waistline -

Fit should be fairly snug. Seam should rest at the normal waistline and form a line straight around the figure. The belt should cover the waistline seam. Location of the waistline is sometimes determined by the style of the dress or by fashion trends.



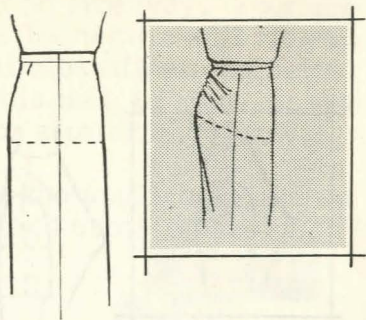
Darts -

For proper fit darts must point toward the fullest part of the

body where ease is needed .
Stitching of darts must be tapered to a sharp point.

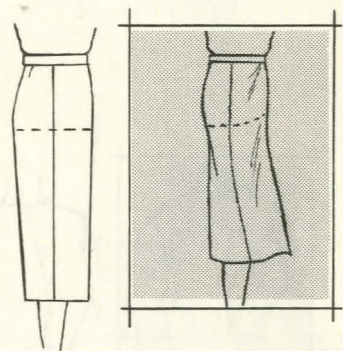
Hips -

Ease must be allowed for bending and sitting. Skirt should not ride up at the hips. Try the comfort of a skirt by walking, sitting and stooping.



Side Seams -

Side seams should form a straight line between the top of the shoulder and the ankle bone.



Hem -

Figure type, height of heels , age, and current fashion determine appropriate skirt length. Hem must hang evenly.

CONSTRUCTION

Every part of the dress must be constructed neatly and correctly to insure fit, durability and pleasing appearance .
Examine the workmanship on both the inside and the outside of the dress . Check the following construction points:

Cut - On straight of grain; matched stripes , plaids , etc.



Seams - At least 1/2 inch wide; entire length of seam even in width; durable seam finish to prevent excessive raveling.

Stitching - Well matched thread; straight stitching; proper length stitch (12 per inch, minimum); threads fastened at the points of darts, end of seams, etc .

Fasteners - Suited in size and type to the garment and its use; sewed on firmly and individually; washable on garment which will be laundered; dry cleanable on garment which will be dry cleaned; rust proof.

Buttonholes - (Machine made) Close, even stitches , deep enough to keep from pulling out; proper size to allow easy yet secure buttoning; matching thread . (Bound or tailored) Neatly made; proper size to allow easy yet secure buttoning; stitched securely for durability.

Plackets - Fit smoothly; long enough for convenience in dressing; inconspicuous; strong; easy to fasten quickly.

Shoulder Pads - Properly shaped for sleeve type; well constructed; removable or washable if dress is to be laundered; dry cleanable if dress is to be dry cleaned .

Trimming - Fiber content with similar wear and care qualities as that of dress fabric; appropriate for the type of dress; easy to iron; durable; detachable trim if cleaning will be required more often than the entire dress .

Belts and Buckles - Washable if dress is to be laundered; dry cleanable if dress is to be dry cleaned; well made; colorfast backing and interfacing; rust-proof buckle.

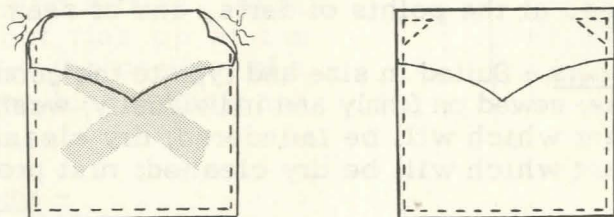
Finishing and Special Details:

Topstitching - Neat, proper color thread, short even stitches .

Hems - Even width (at least 2 inches on straight cut

skirts; a narrower hem on circular cut skirts); inconspicuous and durable stitching. Seam tape (if used) should be of durable quality and suitable color.

Pockets - Neat construction; durable; reinforced corners.

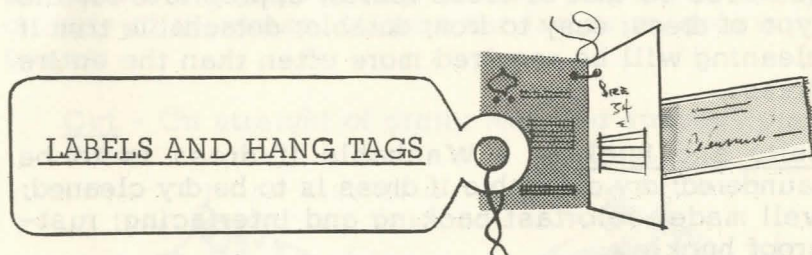


Facings - Tacked in place securely but inconspicuously; edges finished.

Stay-tape - At the waistline seam to prevent stretching; at the shoulder seam if it continues into the sleeve.

Interfacing - Used in parts of the dress which need body, firmness or reinforcement; has care and wear qualities, the same as those of the dress itself; fastened securely to avoid slippage during laundering or dry cleaning.

Lining - Cleanable in same manner as dress fabric; will not stretch, sag or shrink; light weight but firm; cut on straight of grain; colorfast.



Labels and hang tags speak for the fabric and the garment. Informative labels are the most reliable guides to fiber content, special fabric finishes and care instructions. They do not necessarily tell about fabric quality and construction techniques. A good label answers the following questions:



1. What is it made of? (This is now required by law) (Fiber content)

2. What size is it? (Figure type such as tall, petite, etc.)

3. What special benefits can you expect? (Preshrunk, water repellent; crease resistant; colorfast, etc.)

4. What care will it require? (Washing or dry cleaning instructions; bleaching precautions; ironing temperatures)

5. Who makes or sells it? (Brand; manufacturer; store)

It is important that you read and understand the information given on the label and hang tag. Save labels and hang tags from your ready-to-wear dresses for future reference regarding laundering or dry cleaning instructions. Mark each to identify it with the garment from which it was taken.

For information about fabric, style, color and labeling refer to the following Extension Service Circulars:

Fabrics for Quality & Beauty ---	E.C. 59-419
Line and Design -----	E.C. 58-414
Color for your Clothes -----	E.C. 56-411
Clues to Clothing Care -----	E.C. 60-420

- FABRIC
- CONSTRUCTION
- LINE AND DESIGN
- FIT
- LABELS
- COLOR

