



## SEW-lutions Guidelines

Your Guide  
to  
Successful  
Sewing

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## Shapes, Sizes, and What to Wear to Look Great

Women's bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and most can be put into one of five categories. Some pattern companies list which body shapes each pattern is best-suited to. In fashion, the key to looking your best is to identify your body shape and learn which styles best flatter that shape.

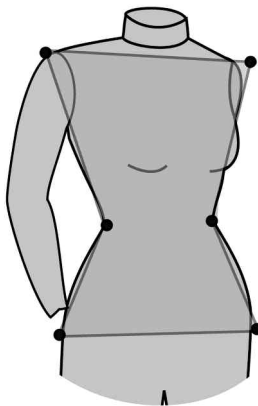
The five basic body shapes are: the Hourglass, the Triangle, the Inverted Triangle, the Slim Rectangle, and the Wide Rectangle.

### Identify Your Body Type

Stand in front of a full-length mirror wearing your undergarments, a leotard or bodysuit. Beginning at the shoulders, visually separate your body into three areas: the shoulder/bust, waist and hips. Imagine a line that runs along the outside of the body at these three points. Which shape best defines your silhouette?

#### The Hourglass

Sometimes referred to as the ideal figure, this balanced figure is marked by wide shoulders, a full bust, a narrow waist and wide hips. It has a defined waistline, and the bust and hips are nearly the same size. The object is to show off your narrow waist and curves without overemphasizing your hips and bust.



**What to wear:** Choose shirtwaist dresses, tailored jackets, straight skirts and slim pants. Tuck in blouses. Good-fitting princess-seam dresses add length and show your shape.

Wear straight skirts, trim pants, and pair full skirts with close-fitting tops.

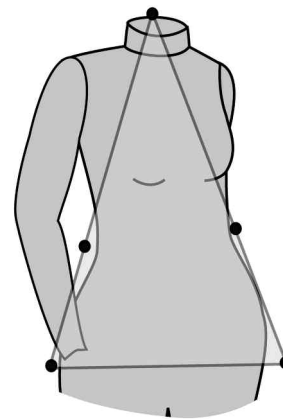
Wear contrasting colors to show off your shape. Details should be of equal interest on top and bottom to keep balance.

Choose vertical lines to give an appearance of length to your silhouette.

**What not to wear:** Stay away from Empire dresses or tops, especially if you have a full bust. Full or boxy shapes (shirts worn untucked) cover your best asset—your defined waistline. Also steer clear of: full tops with full skirts, very full pants, and overall boxy styles or pieces made with bulky, heavy fabrics.

#### The Triangle

Defined by narrow shoulders and a small bust extending to significantly wider hips, this figure is known as the pear shape. Give the upper body interest, drawing the eye up away from the hips. Create balance by accentuating the shoulders and bust and minimizing the hips.



**What to wear:** Choose designs that have detail at the neck and shoulders, drawing the eye up and out: Accent scarves and boat necklines with contrast trims are good choices, as are neckline embroidery, shoulder yokes or wide collars. Dark colors on the lower body, with lighter colors above, draw the eye up.

Ensembles of a single color with contrast at

the neckline will give a sleeker look and draw the eye upward. Shoulder pads help balance the silhouette.

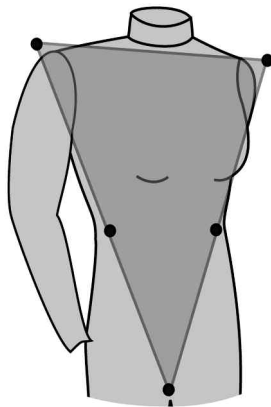
Shirts that hit above or below the hip will be more flattering than those that end at the widest part of your hip. Skirts should be a bit longer and hover around the knee.

**What not to wear:** Stay away from tops or shirts with hemlines that fall directly on the hips. Garments with diagonal sleeves seams, such as raglans or halters, draw the eye down. Skirts or pants with patch or inseam pockets, bulky side seams, or pleats draw attention to your hips. Avoid short skirts that end well above the knee.

## The Inverted Triangle

Defined by broad shoulders, a full bust and heavy upper arms extending to narrow hips, balance this figure by adding interest to the lower body.

**What to wear:** Choose styles that have details below the waist, such as pockets, pleats, a dropped waist, peplums, yoked skirts and skirts with border prints. Tops with V-necks, raglan sleeves or diagonal designs pull the eye down. Wear dark colors on the upper body with lighter colors on the lower body.



**What not to wear:** Garments with a lot of upper body detail (wide collars and lapels, yokes, ruffles and shoulder pads) draw the eye to your larger upper body.

Wear skirts a little shorter, rather than longer, and avoid capris or strongly tapered pants.

## The Slim Rectangle

In this lithe figure, the shoulders and hips are very similar in width with little definition at the waistline—straight up and down with a lack of curves. The object is to give the illusion of curves and define the waist or to enhance the look of the hips and bust.

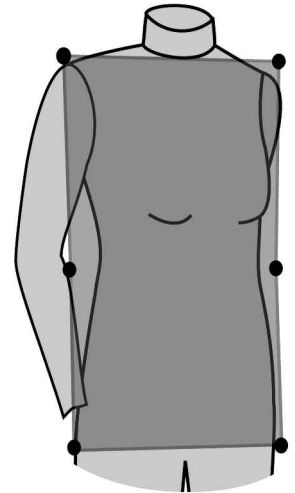
**What to wear:** Wear styles that have detail on the bust and on the hips. Choose designs that have horizontal lines, adding dimension to your shape. Consider unstructured tailored jackets with wide shoulders and

wide lapels, or jackets with small lapels and taper at the waist. Pair contrasting colors on the top and bottom pieces if desired.

Pair full tops with flared skirts or pleated pants. Wear pants with full or flared pant legs and narrow waistbands.

Bulky sweaters and baggy pants work for this body type.

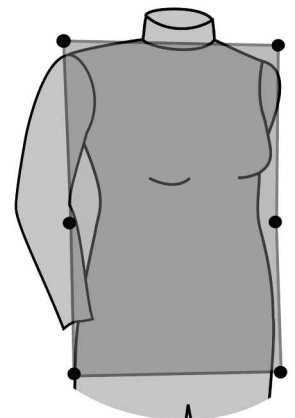
**What not to wear:** Wide waistbands or blocks of colors at the waist draw unwanted attention to your proportionally larger waist, as do large patch pockets, large plaids and patterns with vertical stripes.



## The Wide Rectangle

This body shape is nearly straight up and down. Instead of being slim, however, the figure is wider. To enhance, slim the overall appearance and add curves.

**What to wear:** Start with monochromatic colors and/or muted shades in complementary colors. Sheaths or body-skimming styles with neckline or shoulder details draw the eye up. Princess seams, or a center-front seam, create a vertical line, drawing the eye up and down.



Wear pants with narrow pant legs, straight skirts, shirts with sleeves that taper toward the wrist and vests or jackets that fall below the waistline. Think long and sleek!

**What not to wear:** Blocky, bold, contrasting colors and boxy garments accentuate your width. Details that draw attention to your waist (large patch pockets, belts and peplums) add pounds. 📖