

Figure Focus: Style and Colour Savvy to Create the Look You Want

Design and Colour Strategies Part 1.

Tip 1: Wear Garments with as Many Vertical Design Elements as Possible.

Vertical design elements have a dramatic ability to slim and lengthen any area of the body that it is applied to. The more vertical design influence in an outfit the slimmer and taller you will appear.

When a single vertical design element is placed down the center of a limb or torso (photos A, B, C and E) it effectively divides the area into two equal halves with instant slimming results. When a single breasted sweater or jacket is left open the effect will be strengthened especially if the underlying garment is in a contrasting colour (photo C).

Vertical stripes cut the body up into smaller pieces (photo B) dramatically slimming the area. Stripes in woven fabrics are more likely to slim an area than those in stretchy fabrics due to the fact that your body may cause stripes to curve if the fit is too tight. The creases in the skirt of photo F also fall vertically and are great for slimming the lower body.

Monochromatic outfits are also slimming as they create a continuous vertical line (photo D) The outside silhouette of an outfit can also be vertical as in photo F which will visibly make you look taller and therefore slimmer.

A fancy central vertical design element as in photo E can act as a focal point to draw the eyes away from the width of the body e.g., a large bustline.



Tip 2: Use Colour to Your Advantage.

Colour has the ability to increase or decrease body size. How you coordinate the colours you wear will make you appear taller or shorter. If you combine colours that slim the body with colour co-ordination that increases apparent height you have doubled your slimming power.

Light and / or bright colours appear to advance and will make the area they have been applied to appear larger. Dark colours appear to recede into the distance causing the area they have been applied to appear smaller. In photo C the hips appear smaller than the upper body while the opposite is true in photo A. Medium depth colours neither appear to advance or recede.

Colours can also give the illusion of having a weight of their own. Darker colours appear to weight more than light colours and as a result often look more balanced when worn on the lower half of the body. A light colour worn on the upper body will also draw attention upward increasing apparent height and decreasing apparent height (Photo C).

In the photographs below; Photos A and B requires a tall person and a slender body to look best. Photo C will make the wearer appear the tallest and will visibly decrease the apparent size of the lower body. Photo D is slimming due to the medium and dark colours and the lower colour contrast coordination. Photo E elongates and slims the body through the use of dark colours and by creating one continuous vertical column of colour.



Tip 3: Discover Your Best Silhouette

The silhouette of a garment is its outer shape; all garments have one of four silhouettes: very fitted, semi fitted, boxy and stiff or boxy and soft. Being able to select the silhouettes that are best for you is an important step when purchasing clothing - get this right and you will be well on your way to a great look. Very fitted silhouettes are best for slender, youthful women, Semi-fitted is flattering to all women and is the most desirable and universally appropriate of all the silhouettes. Boxy and stiff silhouettes fall straight, have no shape and fall stiffly. This silhouette is best for full figured women who



are under 45 years of age. For any woman over this age this silhouette can appear matronly if it is not in a current style and colour. Box and stiff is good for women over 45 only if the hemline falls no lower than the high hipline. Boxy and soft is also a boxy silhouette but it is made of a soft fabric that moves with the wearer as they move. This is an easy to wear and flattering style for all ages and weights. It is particularly attractive on more mature, full figured women.

Tip 4: Use Focal Points to Highlight Your Assets

Focal points maybe many things but they all have one thing in common - they attract attention. A focal point may be a bright colour in a dark print, an eye catching piece of jewelry, a motif, embroidery, item of make-up (bright lipstick), hair colour, bag, eyewear or anything that says “look at me”. Every day we place focal points on our body and each one invites attention to where we have placed them. If you have a heavy lower body do you really need a focal point at or below your waist, if you are large busted do you need one on your chest?

After you have dressed for the day stand in front of a full length mirror, close your eyes, open them and ask yourself what you noticed first? The item that caught you attention first will be your most major focal point. Ask yourself ‘is that where I want people to look?’ If not you will need to place a focal point on an area of your body you like better.



Focal Point:
The face and neck.



Focal Point:
The lower body.



Focal Point:
Torso



Focal Point: Waist



Focal Point: Behind



Focal Point: Bustline

You can also counterbalance a focal point in the wrong place by adding a competing focal point in the right place. All three of the next photos have at least two focal points that balance the attention between the upper and lower body. Avoid outfits with more than three focal points as these can look cluttered or busy.



Hat and neckline embroidery balances belt.



Neckline embroidery balances pants.



Top balanced by bag.

Tip 5: Use Universal Colours for their Versatility

Universal colours are those that are neither all cool or all warm. They are also medium in value (medium-light, medium, medium-dark) - they are not very dark, light, bright or dull. Universal colours suit everyone and are seen every year without fail. They make great buys especially when in classic garments and are perfect for uniforms and bridesmaids. There are thousands of universal colours here are just a few from our latest catalogue.



Watermelon red



Chocolate



Denim Blue



Aqua



Emerald Turquoise



Petrel Blue

Tip 6: Choose Fabrics that are Figure Flattering and Feel Comfortable.

Want to look a little slimmer? If this is your aim choose garments that are made from lightweight or thin fabrics as these cover the body but do not add visible weight (photo A). If you feel the cold purchase lightweight high quality thermal underwear to insulate your body without adding bulk. Fabrics that are heavier or have more bulk are best worn as garments on your smaller areas to help create a pleasing visual body balance (photo B, a great jacket to balance a full lower half).

Fabrics that drape over your body are more flattering than those that sit stiffly away from your body adding extra width to your silhouette (photo C). Firm smooth fabrics are figure flattering when combined with a silhouette that mirrors the basic shape of your body - see Tip 3 (photo D). Garments in tight clingy fabrics will should be ordered with caution as they will cling to the body highlighting every unwanted lump and bump.

Textured fabrics tend to add weight to the body while smooth fabrics slim. Included in the category of textured fabrics are those that are crinkled or ruffled. Textured garments are also best worn on your smaller areas to help create a pleasing visual body balance.

Sheer fabrics are great when you wish to camouflage a full upper arm, tummy or full behind (photo E). If the top is see-through a lightweight camisole will create an opaque shield of cover.

Comfort is a critical factor in the success and longevity garment. If you have sensitive skin and find some fabrics irritating or scratchy it is important to only purchase soft garments. If a garment irritates you and ends up living in the back of a wardrobe it is a bad buy at any price (photo F).



Tip 7: Think Image when you Select Fabrics and Trims

All fabrics have an image; velvet, tweed, linen, crepe, lace and denim and wool just to name a few. Each speaks differently about the wearer, their intentions and circumstances. Velvet is soft and feminine, tweed is sporty and natural, crepe is traditional and reliable, lace is romantic and vulnerable, denim is sporty and casual and leather is strong and assertive. The right fabric combined with the right silhouette and coordination can help you create the impression you want and achieve the outcome you desire.



Tip 8: Less is More

While this season is full of wide A-line skirts not every woman will wear them with the same visual results as our models. Reality dictates the less fabric in a garment, the finer the fabric is and the closer it is to your body the slimmer you will look (photo G). On the other hand if you are tall and feel a little on the thin side garments with more fabric and wider hemlines can work wonders (photo F).



Tip 9: Surface Matters

Fabrics have three basic surfaces and each alters the image of the garment and the apparent size of the wearer.

Matt surfaces are those that absorb light rather than reflect it e.g. wool, most cottons and linen etc. Matt surfaces are appropriate for all garments, times and occasions and tend to make the wearer appear slimmer.

Semi shiny (sheen) surfaces have a slight sheen which gives the fabric / garment a slightly dressier appearance than a matt surface. The slight sheen does not add significantly to the apparent size of the wearer unless the fabric is clingy.

Shiny or sparkly surfaces have a highly reflective surface giving the garment a very dressy appearance. The high shine tends to enlarge any area it is placed over and is best worn on areas you consider your smallest or as focal points on a garment e.g. satin or sequined trims around a neckline. Soft shiny fabrics can highlight every bump and lump once you move around.



Tip 10: Proportion it Out.

Sometimes it feels like 'anything goes' when it comes to widths and lengths and all too often women try to imitate looks they have seen in catalogues and magazines only to be disappointed with the results. When it comes to mixing and matching your fashion tops and bottoms there are only four easy guidelines to remember.

1. Slimline tops and bottoms go together and create a long lean look (photo I).
2. A full skirt is best worn with a slim top (photo J)
3. A full top is best worn with a slim bottom (photo K)
4. A full top worn with a full bottom is almost impossible to look good in.



Next time:

- The Co-ordination Rule of Threes
- Thank God for Stretch
- Avoid Hemline Havoc

For Now have Fun Dressing!

Ann Reinten

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