
Accepting Our Curves; it's what makes us who we are.

If for nothing else, you should dress for the pleasure it gives. The way you dress-or package yourself-is the one thing over which you have absolute control. It's fabulous to be a woman as we get to celebrate our femininity by dressing up. Appearance sells or discourages; most assuredly; it is wise to create a climate of acceptance. Lifestyle, not fashion, it should not dictate how you dress.

Our identities are bound up in body image and size. No two women are the same, yet they expect the same item of clothing to fit them alike just because it has the same size tag sewn into it. We are trying to fit our 21st century bodies into clothes that have been made from a 19th century (1926) measuring system that is 100 years out of sync. We are more Rubenesque than statuesque.

Surveys conducted by the fashion industry contends that more than a third of the female population is 5'4 and under, wears a size 14 or larger with a "c" cup bra, so the median size one could safely say is 13/14 with just as many women wearing a size 22 as a size 2, which has become the industry's median in the past few months. The most life changing factor in the evolution of the female figure this past 100 years includes, a more active lifestyle, no whalebones and corsets-the total casting-off of restrictive undergarments, but also, that we're living longer.

All the options for any size over a 14, is almost always plain. I guessed it must be assumed that if you have curves you don't want to call attention to yourself at all. Well I don't think most women see themselves as a wallflower, nor do they want to be, and especially not when you've paid good money for an article of clothing they're wearing. In truth, I am quite happy to get noticed, a little, especially when I know I'm looking my best. It's been said that 'the Englishwoman dresses to impress; the Frenchwoman dresses to please; and the American woman dresses to compete. Why don't we start dressing to please; to please ourselves and our body type? Try it and see what happens.

You can't change the size of your feet, the shape of your legs or your bone structure--but you can change the way you look as easily as an actress does each time she assumes a new role. After all life should be fun, something to look forward to each day. Dressing up should not be a chore but something fun and fantastic and exciting. When you're a child you have your own style, and you dress to please yourself. Unfortunately you grow up, and, by the time you're 8, you've started losing your individuality and begin copying; by the time you're 14, you've lost the dream of yourself and you want to become whatever the media, the movies, and designers say you should be; a real life Barbie: everything, but yourself.

No body's perfect, so accept and work with the body you've got. Accept your body for what it is, camouflaging your challenges and variations, while enhancing your

assets. You do have some of those, assets, I mean. You've got to regain a sense of yourself, keep what you've got, and hold on to your dream. You are not Barbie, you are a unique, interesting, living, breathing individual. Aiming for perfection can be fun, exciting, and rewarding but don't take the joy out of it. It makes good fashion sense to know your body type and work with it. Develop a sense of style, with clothing that allows you to radiate a positive attitude with perfect fit and self-confidence. We know we're all created equal, but we're not all a size 6, 7, or even 12. You're unique, you have curves and you're definitely not average. Clothing made for the average size will not fit all bodies the same way.

The average size came about when garment manufacturers measured a random group of people, added the numbers together, and calculated an average. So when you try on ready-to-wear and it just doesn't fit, don't start going crazy, it's not you, it's the clothes. Also most pattern companies use two or more people for their fit models: one for the top and another for the bottom. See, pattern companies, manufacturers, the powers that be always use the same basic body measurements to draft the corresponding pattern size. So what size are you anyway? A lack of standardization and consistency in the fashion industry has added to the confusion. You have to pay attention to measurements rather than sizes.

A very good example of how things work is like this, at J. Jill and Land's End an XL is = to an 18/20; in contrast an XL at Banana Republic is the same as a 14/16. Also missy sizes are also cut differently from women's sizes, although a good rule of thumb is that women's sizes are almost always cut more generously than missy; but don't be confused with WP which means women's petite. Many people have trouble with fit because they can't break the "ready-to-wear size" habit. This simply means that you have to forget what size you are in ready-to-wear, and start thinking 3-dimensionally, that is, length, height and width.

Unfortunately the further away from the average your body is, the fewer things fit correctly and this is the real problem. The reason ready-to-wear has gotten more hit-and-miss over the years is because the patterns they're designed from, are designed for two-dimensional bodies, that is length and width as the two most important components for creating shape into a garment.

1900-1910 Plump, curvy women were considered the ideal, with the hourglass silhouette greatly exaggerated, but those curves came at a very high cost. After that came women's lib and the end of the corset; Along with the roles of women changing they cast aside the hourglass figure as a symbol of old times and popularized the tunic, a silhouette meant to erase any signs of a woman's hips and breasts. This was followed a decade later with a youthful dress silhouette called the flapper. This new uniform required women to go on a diet, trying to change themselves from their natural curves; and from that time on American fashions have increasingly emphasized slenderness as fashionable. In the 40s - 60s feminine curves did make a comeback with generous skirts to accommodate the curves, but that did not last very long. The 60s -80s became similar to the 20s with the slender, youthful silhouette along with the demand for more social freedoms. Fashion is interpreted along masculine lines, still wanting to be one of the guys. 1980-90 continues with shoulder pads getting broader as women want to

emphasize they're just as competent as the guys, so we became one of the guys. 1990-2000 the emphasis is on being super-skinny but toned.

We're still competing we have not yet come to terms with the fact that we can be successful and still be feminine. At the beginning of the new millennium, we seem to have realized we do not have to be thin in order to be successful. We do not have to dress like one of the guys to be accepted. We are accepted on our own merits, a complement to our male counterparts. Today we're learning to own our curves, our talents and our sizes, whatever they may be, it's what makes us who we are. Today we celebrate our feelings, our emotions, our successes, our failures and our delightful curves, knowing how fabulous it is to be a woman, because no matter how much we achieve, regardless of how many glass ceilings we break, we are still women and we get to celebrate our femininity by dressing up. We have finally arrived!

Claudette Grant
Couturiere / Fit Expert
CGs Couture Designs
7284 Oakland Park Blvd
Lauderhill, FL 33313
(954) 733-7101
1-888-226-8108

