

FIT for FASHION

WHEN BUYING CLOTHES

Cooperative Extension Service Michigan State University

BY BERNETTA KAHABKA
Extension Clothing Specialist

MASS PRODUCTION provides us with fashionable clothes at a price we can afford to pay and in a wide variety of sizes.

Mass production means cutting many layers of cloth at one time and assembling garment pieces with high speed machinery. As refined as mass production equipment and techniques are, they are still guided by the human hand and eye which are subject to variation and error. For example, cutting fifty sleeves at one time with a high speed electric blade may produce some slight variation between the top sleeve and the bottom sleeve because of the many layers of fabric. For this reason you may find some slight differences in identical garments of the same size and brand.

Your best fit in ready-to-wear, of course, will be a garment which is similar to your own body measurements and proportions. Additional fabric in the form of *ease* further allows for body movement and comfort. Perhaps dresses are the type of garments for which an accurate fit is most desirable and most difficult to obtain.

The Commodity Standards Division of the United States Department of Commerce has developed some sizing systems which are recommended for women's and some men's and children's clothing. The system for women's clothing is shown in the accompanying table.

This system of classification is voluntarily used by some industries and large retail units.

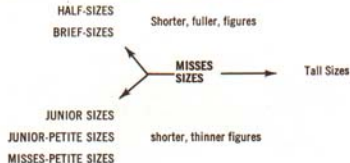
On the other hand, the industry is using an ever-increasing number of size ranges on the basis that sizes themselves can be standardized but not the human figure. It is difficult within the industry to agree on the specific measurements for a figure type. One manufacturer may

FOUR SIZE CLASSIFICATIONS

MISSES	WOMEN'S	HALF-SIZES	JUNIORS
each in Three Height Groups and each in Three Bust-Hip Groups			
	TALL	SLENDER	
	REGULAR	AVERAGE	
	SHORT	FULL	

specialize in one or several size-types. Some sources say that the "average" sized woman apparently doesn't exist and that the "misses" size range fits only a minority of women. This may partly account for the introduction of *junior*, *petite*, *diminutive*, *brief*, and *half-sizes* which are really an expansion (including different proportions) of the *misses* sizes. Proportioned sizes are geared to variations within a height as well as the total length.

EXPANSION OF MISSES SIZES



Therefore, because more size-types are in use by different manufacturers, it becomes increasingly important to try various brands and size-types to get the best fit for your proportions.

Size-type refers to body build and proportion. Two women may have the same height and weight but different bone structure and distribution of flesh; one may be short-waisted and the other may be long-waisted; one may be heavier above the waistline than the other with the result that they will require different size-types.

What Size-Type Are You?

The size-types and ranges shown in the accompanying table are commonly found in today's clothing market. You may not find them all in your shopping area or in every store. All stores may not stock every size-type in its full range of sizes. The volume of sales (present or potential) of the store may warrant such an investment. Shops near a school or college campus may carry a larger proportion of *Junior* and *Petite* sizes while stores in another vicinity may cater to the *Misses*, *Half-sizes*, and *Women's* sizes.

This classification of sizes is general. There will be variations among brands.

Size-Type	Characteristics of Size-Types	Range of Sizes
JUNIOR-PETITE	Small build Short waisted 5'1" tall or under	5 - 15
JUNIOR	Small to medium build Short waisted 5'2" to 5'6" tall	5 - 15 or 7 - 17
MISSSES-PETITE	Slim build Shorter waisted than misses 5'4" and under	8 - 18
MISSSES	Medium build Normal waistline 5'4" to 5'8" or 9" tall	8 - 20
TALL	Slim to medium build Long-waisted 5'8" or 9" and over	8 - 20
HALF-SIZE	Medium to full build Short waisted 5'3" and under	12½-26½ or 8½-24½
WOMEN'S	Medium to full build Heavy build 5'5" to 5'9"	18 - 44 46 - 52

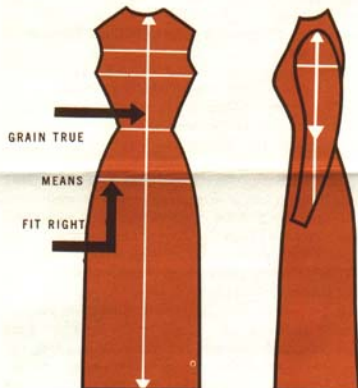
The same size-type may also vary considerably between brands, price levels, and the general types of clothing such as sportswear and dress wear. Manufacturers may vary in terms used for similar size-types. In addition to knowing general sizing patterns, you can select a better fit in ready-to-wear by choosing a style with your body build and figure variations in mind, particularly those variations which require more ease. An example might be a gored skirt for more ease through the hips.

Fashion trends and garment styling affect the desirable tightness or looseness in fit as reflected by the amount of ease. For example, a shirt-waist style dress is acceptably fitted with more ease than a princess style dress. A fashion trend such as the semi-fitted look will appear in garment styling in which a different degree of ease becomes the standard for fitting.

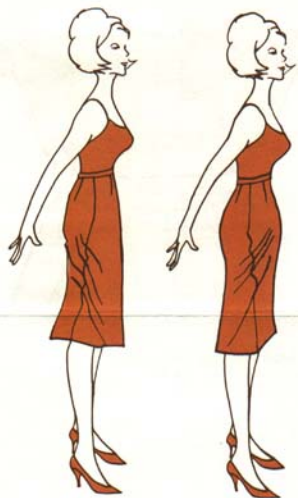
Try It Out

As you try on a garment, give it a real, living test by walking, sitting, stretching, and bending in it. In this way only can you determine if there is enough fabric ease in bust, waist, hips, and shoulders for body movement and if the garment stays in position on the figure in movement. Try clothes on over the type of foundation garment you ordinarily wear.

As you look in the mirror, carefully check the following points in relation to the *components of fit*. They will help you decide the cause and effect of fit.



Lengthwise grain perpendicular to floor. Crosswise grain parallel to floor. Grain line placement may vary in a gored or circular skirt, in a kimono or raglan sleeve.



Back fullness (left) and abdominal fullness (right) both distort grain and seam placement. More ease is required to bring skirt in balance on the figure.



Too little ease causes tight, strained appearance and excessive wrinkling.



Darts should point toward the fullest part of the body directing ease where needed.



Too much back waistline length may cause wrinkling up near neckline or at lower back. Grain line will drop if extra length is at the top of the blouse back.

Too little ease across shoulders also may cause wrinkling across top of blouse back.



Enough ease over sleeve cap (rounded part) is important to prevent strain and allow comfortable movement.



Too much back waist length or a too loose waistline (EASE) may drop waistline seam from normal position.



Too little ease in sleeve width at upper arm causes horizontal (crosswise) wrinkles.

Get to the Bottom of It

Be sure you know WHY wrinkles occur when checking fit. Do they result from:
too much fabric? (*ease*)
or
too little fabric? (*ease*)
or
from poor *dart direction*?

For a most becoming and comfortable fit, check the *components of fit and size-types* in clothing as they relate to *body build*.