

By Size, Not Age

Buying Clothes for Children

Extension Bulletin E-774 — Home and Family Series

Extension Clothes Project — Department of Human Environment and Design
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY — COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Children's Awareness of Clothing

Awareness of clothing comes at different ages in a child's life, but even small children may have definite ideas as to what they want in clothes and how they want to look.

Comfort is essential for all ages but doubly so for the growing, active toddler and preschooler. As a child grows, he wants to do things for himself. Selecting clothes that are easy to manipulate and that have self-help features is one means of helping a child increase his physical dexterity and become self-reliant.

Clothing also can affect how a child adjusts emotionally. From infancy children are learning to adjust and conform to the society in which they live. The way a child is clothed can help aid in this adjustment. Children should feel happy about their clothes and enjoy wearing them. Children have a strong desire to conform to their group; they want to appear well dressed in the eyes of their companions. This helps children to gain greater confidence in themselves when they feel they are making a good impression with their group.



Permitting children to help select their own clothing gives them the opportunity to express themselves and to gain confidence when their ideas and choices are considered. Opportunities for self-expression in clothing is one way that children develop an awareness of themselves as a person.

A child has much growing up to do — physically, emotionally, socially, as well as mentally. Parents can help children to do this in many ways. Clothing selection for and with children is one part of this big task.

Children at a very early age have a great deal of common sense about the clothing they like to wear. To allow preschool children to help in the buying of their clothing, mothers might select several articles of clothing that they find acceptable and let the children choose from them. Girls in elementary school like to accompany their mother when shopping for clothing and help in making decisions. Boys accompany their mother more frequently when slacks rather than shirts are being purchased primarily because slacks, to look trim and be comfortable, have to fit accurately.

In the teen years, conflict between mother and daughter about clothes the daughter should wear is not uncommon. Mothers may want to keep their daughters as little girls while early teenagers may be longing to reach grown-up status, sometimes before they are mature enough. Quantity not quality usually is important to teenagers; the girl with the most dresses, skirts, pants, blouses, and sweaters in her wardrobe has real status in her group.

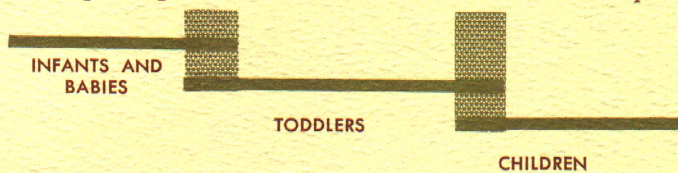
Children of school age want clothing that they don't have to worry about; they need to be free to play and enter into activities without concern about getting dirty. Mothers like to keep their children neat and clean. Clothing to meet all of these demands should be durable, of strong construction, easy to wash, and require little or no ironing.

Buy According to Height and Weight

Clothing for children is divided into five size classifications:

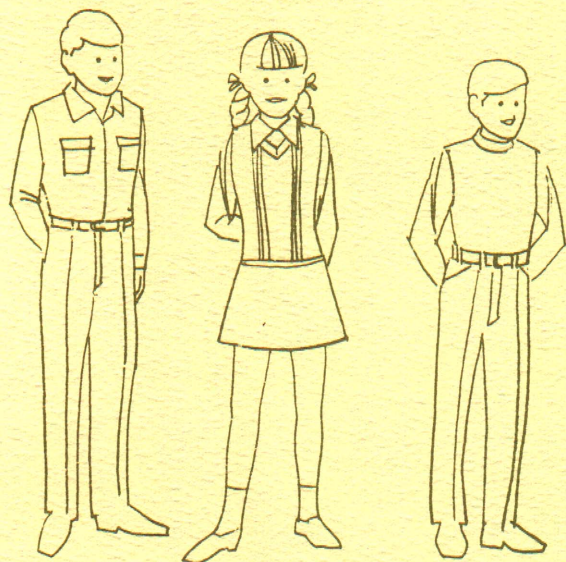
- Infants and Babies
- Toddlers
- Children
- Girls
- Boys

The age ranges in the first three classifications overlap.



The standard sizes recognized by most garment manufacturers are based on relationship between weight and height. Other body measurements also are used to help produce properly proportioned garments within each size classification.

We're All 8 Years Old



I wear
boys'
size 10

I wear
girls'
size 8

I wear
children's
size 6X

To understand the present arrangement of size groupings, it is important to remember that height and weight are the best guides; the child's age has very little bearing on the size that will fit.

Standard Measurement Chart

The following chart gives standard measurements that go with the five classifications according to size, height, and weight, as set forth by the Commercial Standards recognized by the garment industry.

INFANTS AND BABIES		
SIZE	HEIGHT INCHES	WEIGHT POUNDS
3 months	24	13
6 months	26½	18
12 months	29	22
18 months	31½	26
24 months	34	29
36 months	36½	32
TODDLERS		
size 1	31	25
size 2 *	34	29
size 3 *	37	34
size 4 *	40	38
CHILDREN		
size 2 *	34	29
size 3 *†	37	34
size 4 *	40	38
size 5	43	44
size 6	46	49
size 6X	48	54
GIRLS		
size 7	50	60
size 8	52	67
size 9	54	75
size 10	56	83
size 12	58½	95
size 14	61	107
BOYS		
SIZE	HEIGHT INCHES	WEIGHT POUNDS
size 7	48	54
size 8	50	59
size 9	52	65
size 10	54	73
size 11	56	80
size 12	58	87
size 13	59½	93
size 14	61	100
size 15	62½	107
size 16	64	115
size 17	65	121
size 18	66	126
size 19	67	132
size 20	68	138

* Note that the body measurements for toddlers' sizes 2, 3, and 4 are the same as those for children's sizes 2, 3, and 4.

† Sometimes these garments are marked size 3L to indicate additional length and to distinguish them from toddlers' size 3.

How Garments Are Designed

Toddlers' sizes 1 to 4 are cut fuller to fit children in the diaper stage as well as for the child who has not lost his baby roundness and still has short legs.

Children's sizes 2 to 6x are styled for boys and girls who are growing taller and slimmer. In the older age group, styles follow adult fashion.

For toddler's and children's clothing, height is the deciding factor in determining size except when buying training pants and shirts. For these two items the child's weight should be used to determine the size.

Girls' sizes 7 to 16 have four classifications from which to select: regular for the fairly straight undeveloped figure; slim for the slender undeveloped figure; chubby for the heavier undeveloped figure; and junior for figures that are beginning to develop and when height in stocking feet is 5 feet to 5 feet, 4½ inches.

To select clothing for the growing girl, use hip measurement except when buying shirts, blouses, and sweaters; use height and chest or bust measurements when buying these items of clothing.

Boys' sizes 4 to 20 come in slim, regular, or husky. To find size, measure height without shoes. To determine if slim, regular, or husky, use height and weight. For example, if a boys' height is 55-56½ inches, he wears size 11.

If he weighs	he is
under 76 pounds	slim
76-82 pounds	regular
83-90 pounds	husky

Another important measurement is the inseam on boys' pants. You will find this measurement the same for slim, regular, and husky in each height range.

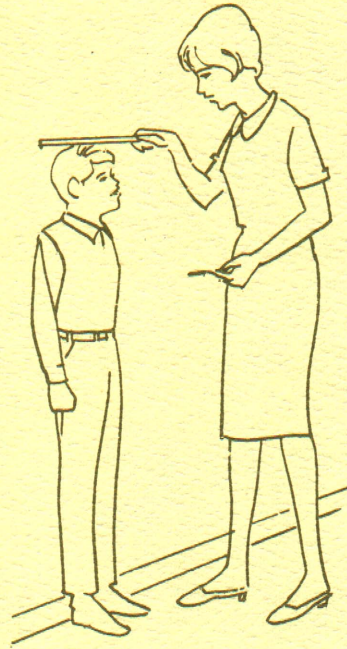
Hangtags Are Helpful

On infants' and babies', toddlers', children's, girls', and boys' basic garments, some manufacturers use informative tags like the one below to make shopping easier:

BUY	Size	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18
If Your Boy Measures	Neck	10	10½	11	11½	12	12½	13	13½	14
	Chest	21	23	25	26½	28	29½	31½	33	34½
	Height	34	40	46	50	54	58	61	64	66
	Weight	29	38	49	59	73	87	100	115	126

This tag corresponds to the standards designated by the Commodity Standards Division, U.S. Department of Commerce. If your boy is a size 10 in terms of the body measurements shown on this tag, you should buy him a size 10 in all basic garments.

How to Take Measurements

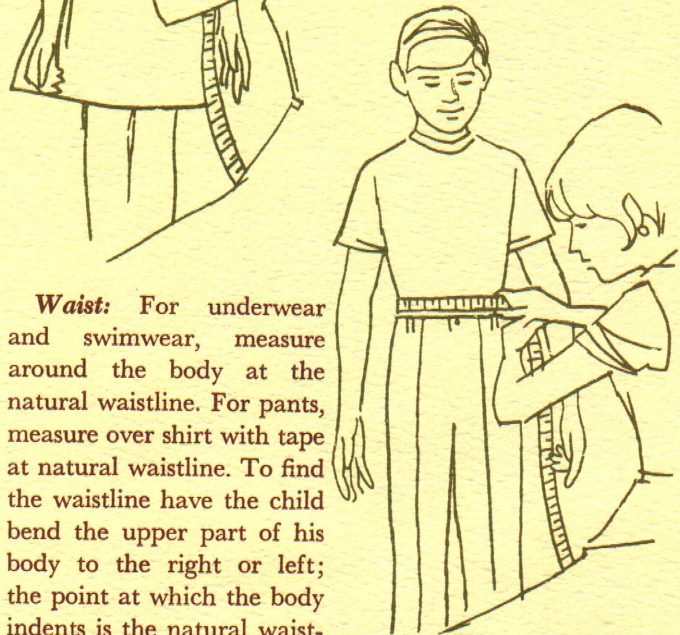


Height: Have the child stand against the wall without shoes. Place a flat object (book, ruler, stiff paper) level with the top of his head. Mark this point on the wall; measure from this marking to the floor.

Weight: Weigh children in their underwear and without shoes.

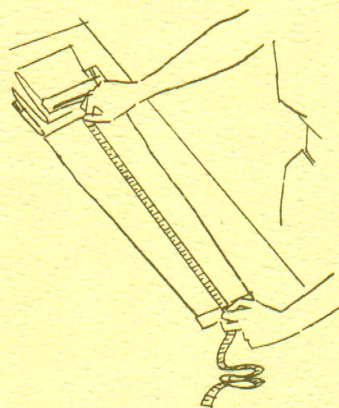
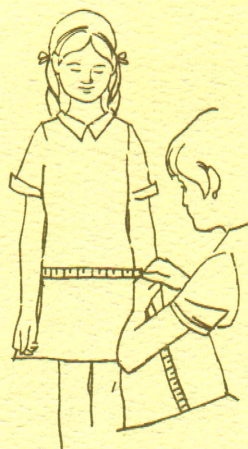


Chest or bust: Measure under arms around the fullest part of chest or bust. Be sure tape is straight across the back.



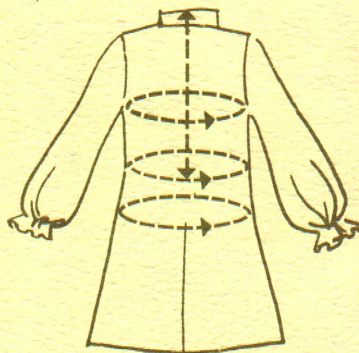
Waist: For underwear and swimwear, measure around the body at the natural waistline. For pants, measure over shirt with tape at natural waistline. To find the waistline have the child bend the upper part of his body to the right or left; the point at which the body indents is the natural waistline.

Hip and seat measurement: Measure in a straight line around the body at the fullest part of the hips keeping tape measure parallel to the floor.



Inseam: Measure along the inside seam line of a pair of well-fitting pants. Lay pants flat on the table, fold back one leg as illustrated. Measure along this inseam starting at the crotch to the bottom of the cuff.

When you plan to buy a child's dress:

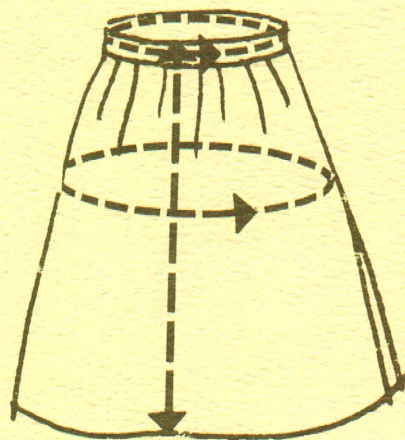


- Measure the child's chest or bust, add 3 inches.
- Measure the child's waist, add 1 inch.
- Measure the child's hips, add 2 inches.

- To determine waist length measure from the prominent bone located in the center back of the neck at the base to the natural waistline, add 1/4 inch.
- To determine length, measure from underneath the arm to the desired length.

When you plan to buy a skirt:

- Measure the child's waist, add 1 inch.
- Measure the child's hips, add 2 inches.
- To determine length, measure from the child's natural waistline to the desired length.



Why Clothing May Not Fit

Even after getting a child's correct height and weight and consulting the standard measurement chart, you may find that a garment bearing the indicated size will not fit. There are several reasons for this:

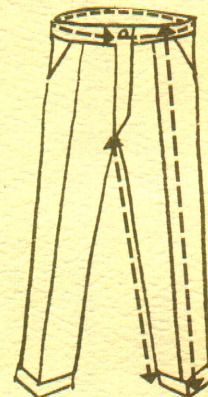
- Not all manufacturers adhere closely to the sizing standards.
- A child may have minor figure variations.
- The style of the garment may be a factor; many children wear one size in some styles and a different size in other styles.

Measurements Needed for Buying Used Clothing

Measurements are helpful when you plan to buy used clothing; however, because used clothing generally is not sized you will need to measure the child and allow for ease. When shopping take a tape measure with you. Find the correct size by actually measuring the garment. Fasten all closures in the garment you are considering buying, then measure the garment. Compare the garment measurements with the child's measurements plus allowances for fitting. The following information gives the allowances needed for fitting.

When you plan to buy a pair of pants:

- Place a tape around the child where he would like the top of his pants to come. Measure around him there, add 1 inch.
- To determine length, measure from the tape down the side of the body to the desired length.
- Measure the inseam of a well-fitting pair of pants.



When you plan to buy a girl's coat:

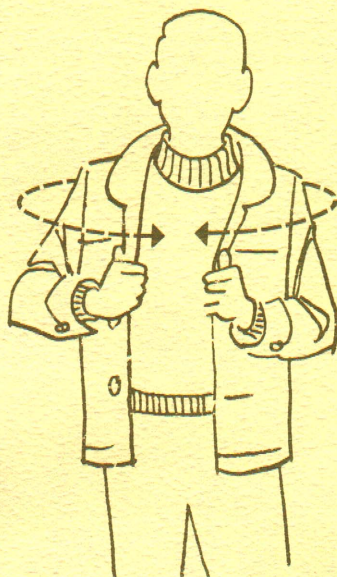
- Measure around the fullest part of the chest, add 6 inches.
- To determine sleeve length, measure from the prominent bone located at the center back of the neck at the base along the shoulder to the wrist.
- To determine length, measure from the prominent bone located at the center back of the neck at the base to the desired length.

Note: If too long, dresses, skirts, and coats are easily shortened. If an item of clothing is too short, don't buy it.



When you plan to buy:

- *A blouse for a girl*, measure around the fullest part of the chest, add 3 inches.
- *A shirt for a boy*, measure around the fullest part of the chest, add 4 inches. To determine sleeve length for a long-sleeved shirt, measure from the prominent bone located at the center back of the neck at the base along shoulder to wrist.
- *A jacket for a boy or a girl*, measure around the fullest part of the chest, add 6 inches. To determine sleeve length, measure from the prominent bone located at the center back of the neck at the base along shoulder to wrist.



Check For a Good Fit

The right size for a child is judged by fit and comfort. If possible, try the garments on the child before you buy. If you are shopping in a store without the child, it is best to select garments you can take out on approval.

Before deciding on a garment for a child, check the following for good fit:

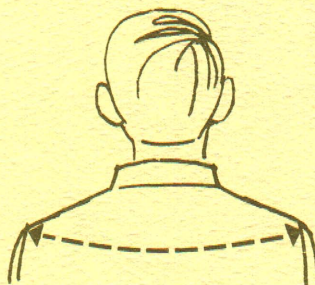
• EXAMINE THE NECKLINE

Is the collar low enough in the front to be comfortable, and snug enough in the back so that it will neither ride up nor slip down? Look for gapping or binding. Either may cause irritation.



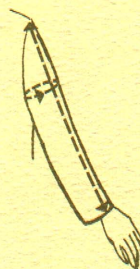
• EXAMINE THE SHOULDERS

They should be wide enough and roomy enough for free arm movement without binding across the back or chest, yet not so fully cut that shoulder seams will not stay in place.



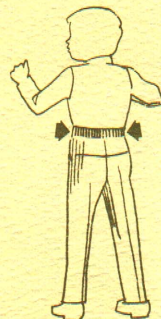
• EXAMINE THE SLEEVES

Roomy sleeves are preferred. Tight ones will restrict movement and pull out with the strain. Cuffs should be slightly loose.



• EXAMINE THE WAISTLINE

Slight looseness will allow for growth and longer wear. Elastic part of the way around will help the garment to adjust to growth. But the elastic should never be tight enough to cause red marks.

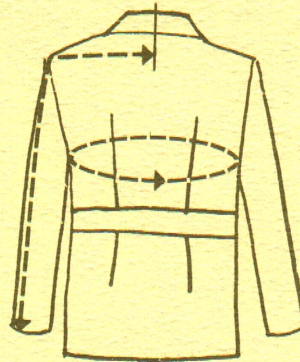


• **EXAMINE THE LENGTH**



Shirts and blouses should be long enough to tuck in at the waist and stay tucked in. Avoid overlong slacks and trousers that may cause the wearer to trip. Look for generous hems that will permit lengthening as needed.

• **EXAMINE THE ROOMINESS**



If the garment will be worn over other clothing in cold weather, be sure to make adequate allowance for this bulk.

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