

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
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ADULT
CLOTHING DEMONSTRATION

Second Year
Demonstration No. 4

Appropriate Dress

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APPROPRIATE DRESS

General Considerations

The term appropriateness may be considered the keynote of successful clothing. The woman who wishes to plan and make or select appropriate clothing may find it worth while to consider the basic principles or laws of artistic and becoming dress. It is the purpose of this bulletin to consider appropriate dress from the standpoints of the wearer, the occasion and the income, and to state briefly a few guiding factors to be used in the selection of clothing. It is suggested that these may be found to be a more sane basis than personal fancy and the sales person's advice.

It is both desirable and necessary that clothing be suited to the occasion and to the age of the wearer. Clothing should also be pleasing in appearance and becoming to the wearer. Money spent on clothing that is unwisely chosen, without beauty of line or color, inappropriate to the occasion and unbecoming to the wearer does not give satisfaction to the owner or to her friends and therefore is an extravagance.

APPROPRIATENESS

Suited to the Wearer

Clothing should be suited to the wearer in line, color and general style. To achieve this requires a careful study of the lines, proportions, coloring and personality of the individual. After determining an individual's best points, it is desirable to select clothing that will emphasize these and cause imperfections to be less noticeable.

The Importance of Line.—The person whose lines and proportions are perfect has a wide range of choice in regard to line and style. Her personal desires, taste and coloring may be given the chief consideration.

Line may be used as a means of modifying and correcting proportions that are not ideal. To make a figure appear taller the vertical line should be emphasized. This may be done by placing the longest possible vertical line in the center of the costume and keeping the boundaries inconspicuous. When the line of trimming from neck to hem is used to give height, it should be the dominant line of trimming and possibly accentuated by the use of contrasting color. To keep the boundaries inconspicuous, avoid decorations on the hips and sleeves as these give width by carrying the eye from side to side. Broken vertical lines must not be expected to convey the idea of height as much as the one continuous line.

A figure may be made to appear wider by the use of horizontal lines which tend to carry the eye across the body. Horizontal lines are produced in the costume by tucks, ruffles, flounces, over-draperies, pockets and wide short skirts. Emphasizing the boundaries of a costume gives width; this may be done by the use of trimming on the sides of skirt and sleeve trimmings of contrasting color. Broad collars, berthas, fichus and capes emphasize the horizontal line.

Concerning Neck Lines and Collars.—The neck line of a garment is important and should be in harmony with the shape of the face and chin, the length of the throat and the general proportions of the body. The rolled collars that fit up at the back are more becoming to the long thin neck and face. Flat collars, especially those that carry the line of the neck opening of the dress down the front in a long slender line, are becoming to the short, thick neck and full face. The shape of the chin must be considered in designing the neck line or collar of a dress. The V shaped neck line accentuates the sharpness of the pointed chin just as the square neck or collar makes the square jaw look even more square.

The Tall, Heavy Person.—The chief concern of the tall, heavy woman should be to keep the dignity and poise her size demands. To do this she must consider carefully lines of her entire costume and the color and texture of materials. It is a mistake for the woman of this type to try to wear the dainty, fluffy dresses that she admires when worn by a tall, slender person. She should avoid the fluffy and highly lustrous materials. The fluffy ones add bulk and are not in accord with her make-up, and the highly lustrous ones tend to increase her size. She should use the dignified, heavy, smooth, lustreless fabrics of the best quality possible. If the tall, heavy woman wishes to be inconspicuous, she may do so by choosing the soft, plain dull finished fabrics in the grayed colors or black. The length of the skirt is important; it should not be extremely short or long.

The Short, Heavy Person.—The short, heavy person should emphasize the vertical lines with the head and face receiving most of the attention, so that the body will not be noticed. Properly fitted garments having long vertical lines are her chief concern. All decorations should be centered around the neck and down the center front of the costume. The smooth, soft, lustreless materials that conform to the lines of the body are suitable. The clingy and the heavy coarse fabrics should be avoided.

The Short, Thin Person.—The short, thin person has a wider range of choice of fabrics in both pattern and texture. The fine, dainty soft materials are suited to her, and daintiness should be the keynote of her clothing. The lines of her costume should be in harmony with the lines of her body.

The Tall, Thin Person.—The slender person must avoid exaggerating height and slenderness by long perpendicular lines; narrow, clinging, close-fitting dresses and coats; tight sleeves, and all angular lines. She may increase width by breaking up the silhouette with horizontal lines in sleeves, waist, skirt and coat. She may use more trimming and color than the stout

woman. Frills, short skirts, broad low hats and side decorations are suitable for her.

Color

Too often a color is selected because it is what "they" are wearing this season or because it is a change from colors that have been worn before rather than because it is becoming and suited to the needs and personality of the wearer. To be becoming, a color must harmonize with the personal coloring of the wearer which means that it must intensify the color of the eyes and hair, and make the skin appear clear and healthy. Colors that make the skin look colorless and cast deep shadows on the face are unbecoming. A color should never be selected because it is beautiful in itself, but because it has the power to enhance the beauty or best points of the wearer. It should not overshadow the coloring and personality of the wearer and thereby be conspicuous.

A study of color, its characteristics and effects, will be valuable in choosing becoming and suitable colors.

The Use of Color

It is impossible to give hard and fast rules to be used in the selection of color in clothing. A list of color suggestions for the different types is not satisfactory because of the many variations of types. The effect of health, age, and the weather upon the appearance of the complexion adds another difficulty and a color that is becoming at one time may be very unbecoming at another. The only hard and fast rule is to select colors that enhance the best features of the wearer and subordinate the less attractive ones.

In selecting and combining colors that are harmonious and becoming to the wearer, the following points should be kept in mind:

1. The warm, advancing colors tend to accentuate size. The large woman must remember that the general background is a neutral gray and that the colors that blend into this background do not call attention to her outline. She can use the grayed hues of blue, blue-green, violet, and taupe. Black is usually her favorite color but this oftentimes becomes monotonous. She should avoid the figured materials, contrasting colors and materials of high gloss.

2. Color should never be so bright as to overshadow the personality of the wearer. It should be a background, a setting for the face and figure.

3. Colors that cannot be worn next to the face may oftentimes be worn if some transparent material is used as a transition from clothing to face. A white or cream collar may be all that is necessary to relieve the unbecomingness of a dress.

4. The color of the eyes can be emphasized by the same color in dress. Blue of the right value and intensity will emphasize blue eyes.

5. The larger the area the less intense the color should be and the smaller the area the more intense the color may be. Dress for children and

small women may be of more intense colors than those for larger persons. The large woman should avoid intense colors.

6. Black and white tend to intensify colors. When black is used with blue, the blue seems brighter and clearer.

7. A small area of bright color may be used to give balance and accent to a large area of dull color.

8. White is becoming to most people because it does not absorb color. By contrast it may bring out imperfections of the skin. It makes the figure appear larger.

9. Black absorbs color and makes one look paler than do the colors. It decreases the apparent size of the wearer but is a contrast to the background and emphasizes the silhouette.

10. Grayed colors make boundaries or the silhouette indistinct and reduces the apparent size.

11. By using two colors having a common hue the common hue is neutralized. The yellow in the sallow skin is neutralized by using deep cream, yellow, and yellow pink. The bright red-purple tones of the florid blond may be neutralized by using purple and red. The brown in the brunette skin may be neutralized by using brown and orange.

12. The texture of a fabric may determine the becomingness of a color. A color that is becoming in a light weight fabric may not be pleasing in a heavy material. Likewise, colors that are becoming in dull finished fabrics may not be becoming in material having a high gloss.

Materials.—The selection of materials is an important consideration in appropriate dress. The material must be selected with regard to weave, weight, texture, quality, and color. It should be of the best quality to wear well and not fade or shrink. It should be suited to the type of garment and to the season.

Plain material is suited to any type of figure and allows the designer more freedom in planning the dress. It allows for tucks, pleats, self trimming and embroidery. Fabrics which are decorative in texture and pattern require very little trimming. Broad conspicuous stripes or plaids of contrasting colors and textures should be avoided by all types. Plaids particularly should be avoided by the stout woman. Figured goods with large, conspicuous designs should be avoided by all types.

Basket weaves and satins with long floats will not give the service that simple close weaves will give.

Clothing Suited to the Occasion

To be appropriate, clothing should be selected that is suited to the occasion on which it is worn. The woman who wishes to be well dressed at all times must keep in mind her clothing needs for different occasions and plan her wardrobe so that she will have an appropriate costume for the usual occasions. This does not mean a large variety of costumes for the average

woman since one becoming garment of good material, conservative in style may be used for several occasions.

Clothing for street, church, business and professional wear has the same general characteristics. It should be simple in construction, conservative in style, becoming and stylish. The material should be durable and of good quality. The suit or one piece dress of material that is suited to the season should be chosen. Shoes and stockings should be inconspicuous and comfortable. The high heels are entirely out of place as are satin slippers on such an occasion. There is a tendency to over dress among business girls.

The school girl loves to express her individuality in clothes. She should keep in mind the idea that school is her work or business and that it is poor taste to make herself conspicuous by wearing elaborate clothing and extreme styles. Her clothes should be selected for comfort, durability, simplicity and attractiveness. High heel shoes, fancy hose, fancy dresses, ear rings and jewelry are some of the things to be avoided by the well dressed school girl.

Sport clothes should be selected for comfort and durability. They should allow for freedom of movement. Durable and easily renovated one-piece dresses, short skirts or knickers with sweaters, middies, shirts or blouses are suitable and comfortable.

For home wear women and girls need clothes suitable for work and for the leisure hours. The garments for house work should be comfortable and of a material that can be easily washed. One piece dresses of cotton are most satisfactory for home work. The woman should have great freedom in the choice of her garments for her leisure hours. When in her own home the background is the one she has created for herself and there she is at liberty to wear the garments that give her most pleasure.

For the social occasion the costume may be selected more for attractiveness and becomingness than durability. The woman should look her best on such an occasion but should avoid being too elaborately dressed.

Clothing Suited to the Income

Clothing may be suited to the individuality of the wearer in both line and color, and to the occasion on which it is worn and yet not be appropriate because it represents the expenditure of a larger portion of the income than it is reasonable to allow for clothing. Clothing should be suited to the financial status of the family. It is wrong to feel that the same standards of dress should be maintained by individuals whose incomes differ greatly. To try to dress according to someone else's social and financial status creates false standards that cannot be lived up to in other things.

