



SEVEN MAJOR BODY CONTOURS

In choosing clothes, the actual measurements of the body are not the main concern—the body's form is made up of height, width, and depth. The body's shape and proportion is a person's body build. A person's best qualities are his/her assets, and his/her liabilities are those features that could be improved. A person should try to emphasize his/her assets and minimize his/her liabilities.

To understand which clothes look best on certain body contours, a person must analyze the contour of his/her body and generalize about his/her shape and proportion. Most people fall into one of the following seven (7) categories.

Tall and Thin:

These people have a wide variety of clothes from which to choose. Gathers, pleats, or fullness of any kind can be worn. Horizontal stripes, bold color, and prints add weight to the slender body. Fabrics that are heavy, nubby, napped, or piled can be worn. This person should avoid looking too thin with vertical stripes, all one-color or dark outfits, and very tight pants, such as stirrup pants.

Tall and Heavy:

These people can be stunning if they are careful and don't become overpowering. Simple lines and soft fabrics in styles that flow gently with just a little fullness de-emphasize the heaviness. Subtle designs, darker colors, and small vertical stripes are best. Avoid bold prints and intense colors. Fussy, delicate designs can look out of proportion. Tight-fitting clothes and clingy or bulky fabrics will make the person look larger.

Short and Thin:

Proportion is the key to success here. Small scaled prints, soft colors, and smooth textures will enhance this figure. Unbroken one-piece clothing, vertical lines, limited construction detail, and uncluttered clothes are the best. Heavy looking clothes and accessories become overpowering.

Short and Heavy:

The vertical look is a must. V- or U-shaped necklines, vertical stripes, one-piece outfits, and A-line clothes are the best. Soft colors, small subdued prints, plain colors, and smooth fabrics help to minimize a person's weight.

Top Heavy:

Large upper body people (shoulders/bust/chest) look good in jackets with simple lapels or none at all. Try and create a vertical look with the jackets. Open collars, slim sleeves, and V-necks are good. Smooth tops in dull colors and small prints will minimize. Use the bright colors and patterned fabrics on the bottom. If the hips are small, then low waist lines, belts at the hips, and hip-length tops will take attention away from the large top.



SEVEN MAJOR BODY CONTOURS

Undefined Waist:

Vertical lines and accents that draw the eye to the face work here. Loose fitting tubular silhouettes and pants with just a little flare work well for this person. Horizontal lines can be used across the shoulders or near the hemline for accent or point of emphasis.

Bottom Heavy:

Plain fabrics with dark colors work well for the lower portion of the body. Collar details, neckline accents, and vertical lines help to draw the eye away from the heavy hipline. Skirts need a slight flair. This person should avoid tight-fitting pants and horizontal lines, especially in the hip area. Sometimes thin arms or narrow shoulders contribute to this appearance. Wearing attractive collars, yokes, and wide shoulder lines help to detract from the heavy hipline.

It is important to note that everyone doesn't exactly fit one contour or another, but in general, these are the most common contours.

-- This information was adapted from Chapter 12 of the book, FASHION, by Mary Wolfe, published by Goodheart-Wilcox.