

# UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

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## CLOTHING SELECTION FOR WOMEN

By

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*Emergency Demonstration Agent*

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
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## HOME ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

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# UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

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## CLOTHING SELECTION FOR WOMEN

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
OF THE STATE OF IDAHO  
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A DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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## HOME ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

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## Clothing Selection for Women

Can you recall, in the days of your childhood, your grandmother's "best Sunday go-to-meeting" gown? Yes, she had only one, until it became too shabby for Sunday wear, when it was replaced and became her "second best" or afternoon dress. She also had some morning or work dresses and many aprons to protect her better clothes but she never had more than one dress for the same purpose, nor did she alter those dresses with every change of season. In those days she was considered a well dressed woman but you say times were different then. Yes, they were different, quite different from those we have just passed through but in some respects they were very like our present day. How did this difference come about and where is the similarity today?

### Changed Economic Conditions

In those days the gowns were made of the best material to be found that could be afforded. They were made in a style suited to their purpose and becoming to their wearer. The greatest skill and care was expended in their workmanship and they were thoughtfully cared for after each wearing because of the value in time, money and thought which they represented, for both time and money were precious then. We were just recovering from the effects of a big war, there was much to be done and money was scarce.

As conditions improved and prosperity came to individuals, as well as the nation as a whole, it became possible to spend larger sums than ever before in personal adornment and as the ability to spend money wisely did not increase as rapidly as wealth, the general tendency became one of extravagance in dress.

Women became unreasoning slaves to fashion and the victims of commercialism. Those who desired to be considered fashionable, adopted blindly and gladly every dictate of the designers and manufacturers of material and clothing.

It was impossible for everyone to afford these rapid changes in fashion so in order that they might keep pace,



the demand for well appearing yet inexpensive materials has resulted in placing upon the market quantities of unenduring yet attractive looking materials. The changing fashion has also caused the discarding of only partially worn garments or necessitated their remodeling before half worn.

### Present Demands

Now has come the time for all this to be changed again. At the close of this greatest of wars we are facing a position, not of scarcity of money, but of shortage of textiles. It now becomes a duty to save all available material and it should be a privilege to aid in the establishing of standards of sane, economic and healthful dress that will also have the essentials of beauty and grace.

To do this our first consideration should be given to the supply already on hand. After a careful inventory it is possible to plan for replenishing and to look ahead to next year's needs. If possible, it is advisable to anticipate needs and plan for two or more years at a time as it eliminates duplication.

The second consideration is the amount of money that should rightly be spent on clothing for the entire family and the proper apportioning of this amount among the different members, so that each one's needs will be met. If a budget system were uniformly followed it would be possible for all to be better dressed at less cost. Following a budget, one shops with a definite purpose, knowing one's needs and what one can afford to spend. It prevents waste, promotes saving and assists one in distinguishing between first class quality and high price.

The aim of a budget is a wise distribution of income. Discrimination is the greatest essential in expenditure. The amount to be spent must be adjusted to a list of essentials. When these are supplied, desirable additions may be made with the surplus but with the budget system fundamentals are always provided for. From 10 to 25 per cent of the entire income may be expended upon dress according to the size of income. Fifteen per cent is a good average and 20 per cent a high allowance for incomes up to \$2,000 a year.

### A Suggestive Outline for Inventory and Budget

Articles of clothing needed	No. on hand	Garments or materials to be utilized	To be purchased	Cost of Repair	Cost of new material
1 Coat .....	1				
1 Dress .....		Mother's old suit	1 pattern, 1 sp. thread	\$2.00	\$0.27
2 Waists .....	1		Waist ready made.....		\$3.00
1 Skirt .....		Old wool dress.....		\$1.00	
1 Camisole .....	1				
2 Petticoats .....	1	Old silk dress.....	1 sp. thread, ½ doz. snaps	\$0.75	\$0.12
3 Teddies .....	1	1 crocheted yoke, 2½ yds. linen lace	3½ yds. cambric, 1 sp. thread, 1 ball crochet cotton, 1 bolt bobbin tape		\$1.41
2 Corsets .....	1		New corset .....		\$5.00
3 Union suits....	3				
3 Night gowns..	1	1 crocheted yoke	3 yds. nainsook, ¾ yds. crepe, 1 sp. thread, 2½ yds. lace		\$2.79

and so on through the list of clothing including hose, shoes, hats, sport clothes, accessories and every article of clothing needed throughout the year.

#### Suggestions for Economic Selection

Limit the garments to the least practical number. Wherever possible let one garment serve two or more purposes but never have several garments for the same purpose, differing only slightly in color or design. A few carefully selected, well made garments with conservative lines will outwear several cheaper ones and look well without remodeling as long as they will hold together. Cheap garments are always an extravagance.

Colors also should be limited. In replenishing, consider well the clothing on hand and select such colors as will be becoming but which will also harmonize with those already in the wardrobe if true economy is to be practiced.

Select good durable material suited to the purpose of the garment. A good substitute is generally better than a poor quality of pure fiber; i. e., mercerized cotton is better than linen tow or spun silk. Choose good material for garments that are to receive hard wear. Plan to save on summer clothing so as to have plenty for the more expensive winter garments. The highest grade wool cloth that can be ob-



tained put into outer garments will be economy because of the warmth and dust resistance procured and the longer service given by such material. Cotton or cotton and wool mixtures will give very satisfactory service for all other articles of apparel. Pure wool is very elastic and springy. Consequently when all wool material is crushed and let free again it springs back with only a slight impression of the wrinkles. Cotton is easily crushed and the greater the per cent of cotton the more easily a garment is wrinkled and the more frequently it should be pressed. On the other hand, pure wool, properly and well pressed will hold its shape and retain its folds and pleats much longer than cotton or cotton mixtures.

If a mixture of fibers is to be used it is advisable to have fibers intertwined in the thread, or in alternate threads, or cotton one way and wool the other. Any of these combinations will give satisfaction but there is danger of uneven shrinkage if wet, resulting in a wavy appearance when groups of threads of either fiber are woven together.

#### Identification of Fibers

**WOOL**—The simplest test for wool determination is that of burning. Wool burns slowly with the odor of burnt feathers, the flame goes out quickly and a hard, rounded mass is left as a residue, while cotton burns rapidly with a flash and an odor of burnt paper and leaves a fine powder as a residue. Pure silk responds as wool and linen burns similarly to cotton.

Where fibers are intertwined an acid or alkali test will be more satisfactory. Wool and silk are destroyed by alkalis and cotton and linen by acids. If a sample of wool is boiled for fifteen minutes in a solution of household lye, one tablespoon of lye to a cup of water, or for half an hour in a solution of washing soda, pearline or gold dust, in proportion of five tablespoons to a pint of soft water the wool will become a gelatinous mass and if rubbed between the fingers in clear water will disappear completely leaving only cotton or linen threads.

**COTTON**.—If cotton is placed in sulphuric acid for fifteen minutes it will dissolve when washed in fresh water and threads remaining are either wool, silk or linen, as linen does not respond as readily as cotton.

**LINEN.**—Cotton and linen may often be distinguished by tearing. Linen is difficult to tear because of its long strong fiber, so tears with a shrill sound, leaving a very uneven edge of long and short stiff ends. Cotton, consisting of a short, weaker fiber, tears easily and leaves a smooth, fuzzy edge of short soft ends, slightly curled.

A more reliable test, however, especially if there is a union of cotton and linen in one material, is that made with oil or glycerine. Place a drop of either upon the cloth after removing all starch then press between pieces of blotting paper and hold up to the light. Cotton threads will remain opaque while the linen will become transparent.

With our present shortage of linen, substitutes must be used and it will usually be found more satisfactory to buy a good mercerized cotton than one in which cotton and linen are combined. Linen tow is generally used in such combination and neither the gloss nor the endurance will be procured from it that will be found in a good piece of mercerized cotton.

**MERCERIZED COTTON.**—Mercerized cotton is cotton which has lost its twist and become lustrous by means of immersion under tension in a strong caustic soda bath. Only the best grade of long staple cotton is used for this purpose and by this treatment the fiber has grained, rather than lost in strength, so it becomes a very durable fabric and an excellent substitute for either linen or silk. It absorbs dye more easily than linen or ordinary cotton and the colors are more permanent. The cost of manufacture is increased by the mercerization but it is not so expensive as good linen and its wearing qualities make it much more economical than a poor grade of linen which might cost more.

**SILK.**—Silk is usually distinguished by its high luster and length of fiber. The silk spun in a cocoon varies in length from three hundred to fourteen hundred yards but the coarser outside and the inside filaments are not used for reeled silk. These and silk from pierced cocoons are used in making spun silk which, because of the shorter fiber, has less luster and lacks the strength of the reeled silk. Because silk is very expensive manufacturers have taken advantage of its high absorptive power and make it go farther by weighting it. One pound of silk can be made to weigh



three or four pounds by a bath in metallic salts. Sugar, glucose, gelatin and paraffin are sometimes used as loading but more frequently iron, tin and lead are the weighting substances and silk, so weighted, will crack and fall to pieces in a very short period of exposure to sunlight and wear.

Pure silk will burn like wool but if loaded heavily the shell of the sample is left as the silk burns out and leaves the weave construction.

**ARTIFICIAL SILK.**—Artificial silk is made by treating wood pulp or cotton with chemicals and forcing the gelatinous mass thus formed through very tiny tubes in an apparatus called a spinning frame. It comes from these tiny spinnerets as fiber, which is solidified in a liquid and then wound into skeins. Its luster is superior to that of silk but in every other respect it is far inferior. It has a tendency to become weakened when wet and dissolve in boiling water so great care should be taken in its laundry. It does not, however, become yellowed by washing as does silk.

### Useful Hints to Shoppers

Avoid novelties and fads. Buy standard materials and buy after the rush season. Advanced styles are expensive and extreme styles are never lasting.

In buying material it is well to keep in mind the following points:

**TEST FOR FIRMNESS.**—A firm material will endure more hard wear and strain than a loosely woven material. The latter is apt to pull at the seams, catch on rough surfaces, or the threads be pushed together in laundering. A test may be made by pulling threads with a strong pressure between thumb and first finger. If they pull aside easily they are loosely woven.

Weave also should be considered in regard to the wear it will give and care it will require. A plain weave may become soiled more easily than a twill or fancy weave but the dirt is more easily removed from it in laundering or brushing. Loosely woven cloth catches and holds dust and stands very little friction. The satin and overshot weaves require more care than the plain.



**TEST FOR SIZING.**—In cotton goods a loosely woven cloth is often overly sized in order to give the appearance of firmness. Hold the material to the light and the filling will usually be detected between the threads. This starch or dressing may be dislodged to some extent by scratching with the nail or rubbing between the hands but a more complete test is made by brisk rubbing and boiling. If the boiled sample after drying is limp and sleazy and the space between threads noticeable the material is very undesirable.

**TEST FOR STRENGTH.**—Material of equal strength in both warp and woof threads is very durable but such material is not very common. The woof threads are generally weaker than the warp and will stretch more but care should be taken that the difference in strength is only slight and that the threads in both directions are fairly even so that any strain will be equally distributed. A test for strength may be made by grasping the material between the thumb and first finger of each hand with the tips of the thumbs touching, drawing the fingers away from each other and the backs of the thumbs together until the knuckles touch, force thumb tips apart. A great deal of strength can be procured by this action and if material will stand the strain in both directions, it should be very durable. Apparent weak spots in garments that are to be remodeled may be tested in this way and much energy saved if goods is too much worn to warrant its use.

### Selection From a Hygienic Standpoint

In selecting **shoes** it is well to choose a style, standard in shape and color, carefully fitted with special attention to length and arch. Cloth tops and canvas shoes help to conserve leather and should cost less. Rubbers are an economic investment as they prolong the life of shoe leather.

**Simple underwear** saves in both initial cost and laundering. If ready to wear garments are purchased select those of good workmanship.

When one has the time and ability it is economy to make at least a part of one's clothes. Better material and workmanship as well as individuality will thus be procured. Home-made garments permit an expression of personality

and distinctiveness impossible in selection from commercial products.

### Suitability to Individual

COLOR.—“Much of personal beauty, refinement and elegance is sacrificed by the unwise selection and association of colors in dress; while an augmentation of the natural charms may be easily secured by the artistic application and grouping of harmonizing tints.” The coloring of hair, eyes and complexion must be considered and the figure must not be overlooked in choosing becoming color combinations. The hair becomes a part of the color scheme but may be brightened or dulled by the costume. The depth and strength of color in the eye may be enhanced or it may appear to be faded, according to correct or incorrect selection. If one has a clear healthy complexion, there is little difficulty in selection, for one can be mainly guided by the coloring of hair and eyes, but with a sallow skin, pallor or too florid coloring, the complexion must be the determining factor. Dark blues or warm browns often have a certain purifying influence, while yellows and buffs are to be avoided by the skin displaying sallowness. Pallor may be relieved by rich warm hues not too dark or intense, however, as it may be intensified by contrast. Greens, darker blues, rose and warm grays are good; while yellow, pale blue and lavender are to be avoided. Cool shades which have no tendency to reflect warmth and color should be adopted by those having a natural high coloring. Bright blues and greens, lavender, violet, deep pink and purples should be avoided. Yellow, rich maize, deep gold, dark blue, flesh or shell pink, light grayish blue and cream white are usually easily worn. A softened effect is always obtained by means of a transparent material near the face, and many combinations are thus possible which could not otherwise be worn.

The well proportioned figure with good lines does not require quite the same thoughtful consideration as the small or large figure. Black and white stand out strongly as they are the most remote from the grayed middle values in ordinary backgrounds. White tends to make the figure appear larger and as a mass. Black calls attention to its boundaries, so while it is usually considered that it makes one look smaller, it should be avoided unless the outline of



the figure is pleasing. Blue, blue green, blue violet, of about middle value, very gray and taupe are well adapted to the stout figure. Being retiring colors they melt into the background and do not give prominence to the figure. A touch of color may be used near the face to brighten the costume without drawing attention to its boundaries.

The occasion upon which the costume is to be worn, or its purpose, will influence the choice of color. Texture also plays an important role in a color scheme. Cotton and wool absorb light and have a tendency to dullness; silk and velvet, being lustrous, reflect light and dark; while chiffon and crepe transparencies lend variety but tend toward unification.

DESIGN.—While it may be very pleasing, correct coloring alone will not effect an artistic costume. Thought must be given to the form, line and texture. Soft clinging garments are most becoming to some, while others are only well dressed in the more tailored costumes and it is not the lines alone that have produced the results. The design and the texture of materials used are interdependent. A stout woman should select fabrics such that neither their bulk, weave, finish, color nor design will add to her proportions. Thick, loosely woven cloth, figured materials and those of high luster or rigid weave tend to increase their apparent size. Soft, clinging, low luster fabrics tend to reduce proportions. Stripes and plaids must be used only with greatest care.

The purpose of the garment or the occasion of its use should also influence its design. A well dressed woman is never conspicuous. There is a balance and unity of the entire costume which is pleasing and attractive, more attention has been given to good line and space proportion than to the fads and fancies of passing fashion. Designs should be selected which tend to eliminate rather than accentuate slight imperfections of figure. The silhouette or outline of the figure is seen by a greater number of people than the lines within the costume so the outline is of first importance.

Though the prevailing impression is that vertical lines tend to lengthen the figure and horizontal lines tend to shorten it, this is only partially true. A vertical movement of the eye tends to give length and a horizontal movement to



give breadth. To give an effect of height, place the longest possible vertical or slightly oblique lines within the central portion of the figure but place no points of emphasis in the way of trimming on the outer parts. To broaden the figure, emphasize the outsides of sleeves, the sides of the skirt and outer parts of the shoulders, making such an arrangement of trimming that the eye will be carried across the figure rather than up and down.

In making garments those of few seams require less time in making but usually require more material. At this time we should be careful to select such designs as will conserve cloth. Wide material will cut to better advantage than narrow, as a general rule, and the width of material should be figured on in estimating the amount needed. Materials having a nap or an up and down pattern, a right and left figure, or a large design are often wasted because of difficulty in cutting. These could profitably be avoided at this time.

### **Appropriateness to Use**

Though a costume may be beautiful in itself, its entire effect is ruined if it is worn without regard for its appropriateness for the particular occasion or use. A partially worn and soiled evening gown is not appropriate for a morning house dress. House dresses should be neat, simple, convenient, permitting free bodily movement and of material which launders well and easily. A fussy woolen dress is entirely out of place in a sick room. A garment which can be thoroughly sterilized is the only appropriate one for such an occasion. A business woman's or school girl's costume should have special attention, that it be appropriate; simple, well tailored suits and dresses are much "smarter" than the expensive, transparent, overly trimmed and extreme fashions so frequently worn. Every costume must be considered in relation to its surroundings. That which might appear well in a large city gathering may be out of place in a small community. Neat, appropriate, well-fitted, well made and becoming clothing makes the wearer unconscious of her clothes, places her at ease, and creates self respect and wins the confidence of others.

Probably there has never been a better summary of an ideal of correct dress than has been given us by John Ruskin in "Arrows of the Chace."

"Right dress is, therefore, that which is fit for the station in life and the work to be done in it; and which is otherwise graceful, becoming, lasting, healthful and easy; on occasion, splendid; *always* as beautiful as possible.

"Beautiful dress is chiefly beautiful in color—in harmony of parts—and in mode of putting on and wearing. Rightness of mind is in nothing more shown than in the mode of wearing simple dress."

Though there is no longer the great demand for textiles for war needs it will be many months before we will again have normal conditions and prices. Conservation of clothing, therefore, should be carefully and thoughtfully practiced.

Utilize every available bit of material now on hand.

Select patterns which require the least practical amount of material.

Plan carefully, know your needs and buy only the necessary amount of any textile fabric.

Real success in dress depends not so much on the amount of money spent as upon how it is spent, the good taste and good judgment used in selection and the care taken of clothing after its purchase.

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