

Dress Designing Essentials

Unit

7

Unit 7

Dress Designing Essentials

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this Unit the learner will be able to:

- Explain how to choose appropriate materials according to the design's requirement
- Explain how to choose appropriate colour for a design

The dress designing involves the following things:

- The study of the structural lines of the human figure.
- The requirements of individual types. Suitability.
- The selection of materials, with reference to colour, texture and weave.

Detail—which is ornamentation and shaping, and an analysis of the laws of design embracing proportion, rhythm, harmony and the perfect balance of line, mass and colour.

In general the designing of a garment for can be classified in four categories.

1. Choice of Material
2. Choice of Colour
3. The Design or Structure
4. Decoration

Choice of Material

The first point to be considered when designing a dress is the occasion for which the dress is planned, as this will dictate the kind of material of which the garment is to be constructed, the appropriate colour, the form or design and the type and amount of ornamentation.

In regard to the material which is to be chosen, remember that stiff hard fabrics do not drape well and should be used where more tailored effects are desired. While selecting material for the dress, take individual into consideration. Avoid stiff, wiry, hard surfaced materials for the large person as they seem to make one look stouter. Just as soft dull

fabrics tend to reduce the appearance of size in a large person, so do the materials which do not cling to the figure tend to make the small, slender person appear larger.

All of the material used in a particular dress should be of approximately the same quality; that is, avoid using cheap cotton material on a dress largely composed of very fine voile. Some materials which are quite different, such as certain wool fabrics, may be used with satin, or frequently spring or summer suits of wool are ornamented with linen or pongee. Combinations of this kind lend variety to the dress or suit so that they are not severely plain or monotonous.

The small person may look well in a dress made of such material, but even so it is desirable that the pattern or design is not too conspicuous. Large figured patterns in dress material looks tiresome after a short time as in rugs, wall paper, etc. Plain fabrics or materials give small figures a quiet effect and as a rule can be worn safely by everyone.

Choice of Colour

Colour in costume attracts or repels at once. No costume, however correct in line and design, can be beautiful when made of a colour or combination of colours that are discordant. The combination of colours in dress is as much an art as mixing pigments and applying them to the canvas.

For a cool combination choose the grey and blue of an autumn sky. The summer sky shows nature in one of her most beautiful moods, we have combinations of grey and lavender, pink and blue, grey and rose. In the woods, nature chooses russet and brown and dull yellows as her favourites, and adds a splash of green here and there to give inspiration to the artist.

Study the individual carefully and select a colour that will bring out desirable features and will obscure and make less noticeable those which are not so desirable. Be careful in choosing too bright colours, for there are few people who can wear them well. What is good for the young is not so suitable for the mature. Also remember the occasion on which the dress is to be worn.

The Design or Structure

The design or structure of the dress depends very much on the type of dress, that is, whether it is a house dress, an afternoon frock or a formal evening gown. The silhouette or general outline should follow the lines of the figure, but of course not too closely.

Structural lines and decorative designs should be so placed as to avoid the monotony of space divisions. For example, the dress should not be divided into two equal parts by a sash or belt; an uneven division is much more interesting.



Fig 7.1

This long jacket and short skirt combination is a good example of proportion where as with same size jacket and skirt will look boxy

The curved line is the line of force and beauty and all lines of the human figure are at least slightly curved. So when planning the dress; remember to show some degree of curve.

The design or structure of a dress must be made up of parts that show a proper relationship to the human figure, it should bring out the person's good features and should skilfully cover the poor ones.

Decoration

Sometimes an apparently well designed and proportioned dress appears to lack something. Very often if a simple decoration is added to a dress it would transform the appearance of the dress. It might be only a pin, buckle or tie of contrasting colour, which in itself would seem trivial yet, is the key to the whole scheme. On the other hand, a designer should avoid overdoing the decoration or trimming, for it is just as easy to spoil a beautiful gown through an oversupply as with a lack of it.

Splendid effects may be achieved through decoration with tucks, plaits, ruffles, tiers and bands of the same material as the dress. As a rule the question of decoration is not so much a matter of material as it is a choice of quantity and the proper application of the decoration selected.

The decoration used should be in keeping with the material of which the dress is made. Coarse materials permit greater freedom in the matter of decoration than do fine textured fabrics.

THE PROPORTION OF THE FIGURE

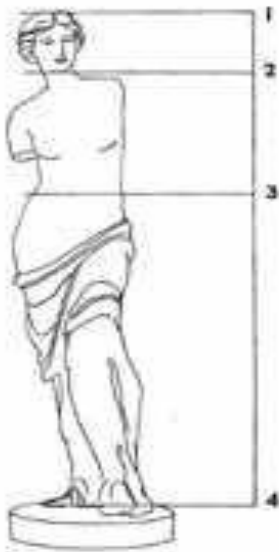


Fig 7.2

Figure 5.1 illustrates the structural lines and proportions of the human figure.

Point 1 is the top of the head. Point 2 is the chin. Between point 2 and 3 is the most important structural part of the garment. Point 3 illustrates the correct structural waistline. Correct proportion of figure can be gained by using the head as a unit of measurement. The body, from top of head to feet, is ordinarily 8 heads. From the chin to waist line is ordinarily from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 heads. Across the shoulders is $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ heads.

After studying the proportions of the body, the structural points, and experimenting with the heads as a unit of measurement, find the structural points of your own figure and see whether or not your height is eight times the measurement of your head. Perhaps you are only 6 heads high instead of eight. If so, you are shorter than the average person. Perhaps you are ten heads instead of eight.

In either case, find the best structural point to remedy the discrepancy in the body measurements. It may require a change in line between points 2 and 3, or a change in line between the points 3 and 4. For instance, a deep V line between points 2 and 3 will give the appearance of length and add to the height of the body. On the other hand,

if the figure is ten heads high, many ruffles or circles between points 3 and 4 will detract from the height.

Unusual Figures

Few people are as perfect as to general figure, shape of the face, colouring, that they are able to wear almost any type of dress and look well. Many of us have certain peculiarities such as narrow shoulders, flat chest or round shoulders, a large bust, or our face may be very square, so that we must use care in the design and selection of our dress.

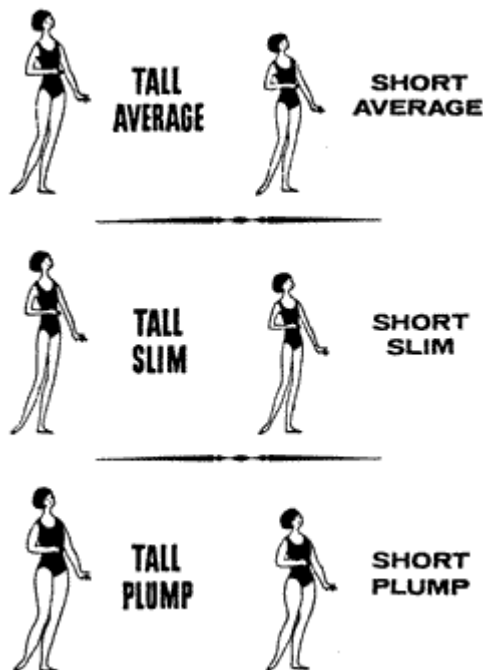


Fig 7.3

The Thin Figure

Choose materials which do not cling to the figure and remember what has been said about shiny materials increasing the appearance of size. The lines of the silhouette should not be continuous.

Create the effect of horizontal movement in the lines of the dress as has been suggested by the use of ruffles, tucks, etc. A wide girdle will cut down the height, and clothing which is light in colour will make the person look stouter.

Suitable

- Lustrous materials, unless the person is too angular
- Materials that stand out somewhat from the figure
- The silhouette of the dress shown broken, rather than long beginning line
- Horizontal movement in the line of the dress
- Wear loose clothing
- Broken lines and curved lines
- The soft, full line of drapery in the waist
- Use short collars
- The sleeves gathered in to tight
- Use patch pocket
- Wear cap
- Hats with low crowns

Unsuitable

- Severely straight lines
- Angle in the lines of the dress
- Long narrow skirt
- Flat tight waists
- Sleeves so short that the bones of the arm are conspicuous
- High hats
- Stiff trimmings as wings or standing out from the hat

The Stout Figure

It is not only the thin person who has her troubles, a person having stout figure may have dress problems too. Soft materials with a dull rather than a shiny surface are suitable for the stout figure.

A person with stout figure must never try wearing a dress which is too tight for him/her, because this merely emphasises the figure. Just as the thin person must create a horizontal movement of line, the stout person must obtain a vertical movement by the use of devices which will cause the eye to travel up and down rather than across the dress.

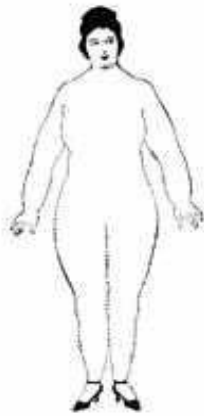


Fig 7.4

The stout person (fig 7.4) should avoid extremes in dress, as, for example—very short or very long skirts, very tight sleeves, or the flowing variety. A long V line to the neck is always desirable. When selecting a fur coat for a stout figure, never take a raccoon or any long-haired fur, for it has a bulky appearance. Mink, squirrel or seal are much better.

Suitable

- One material or colour, used throughout the costume rather than breaking it up into separate parts.
- Soft yet not clinging fabrics.
- Fabrics with dull surfaces.
- Dull colours in large areas.
- Black, or very dark colours if the silhouette is good. If the outline of the figure is poor, use fairly dark colours to reduce size, but not so dark that they will call attention to the silhouette.
- An unbroken silhouette, if the figure is normal.
- Semi fitted, rather than tight effects in the dress as a whole but moulded to the hips with some fullness below.
- Transitional lines in the dress rather than extreme curves or angles.
- Vertical movement in the lines of the dress.
- The emphasis on the dress up and down the centre front, with the principle accent at the throat and, if possible a subordinate one at the bottom of the skirt.
- A long diagonal line in the waist is excellent for a stout figure, provided the diagonal is not directed too far out toward the hips. Carried too far it will broaden the waist and hips.

- Panels of moderate width, Pleats, panels, etc., that starts above or below a point where the figure is large.
- Comparatively long skirts.
- Skirts that flare a little in centre front with a straight silhouette.
- A normal waist line or slightly above or below it.
- No belt or narrow belt
- Slim, long set-in sleeves
- Normal armhole, or bit higher if the shoulders are broad
- Sleeves that are slit vertically to show the length of the arm and only a portion of the width.
- Simple neck lines, preferably long lines and long collars.
- Short jackets the same colour as the skirt.
- Dark furs.
- Hats of moderate size.
- Hats that suggest an upward movement.
- Hats with irregular lines in the brim and a rather high crown.
- Hats with transitional lines rather than extreme curves or angles.
- Hair dressed high.

Unsuitable

- Lustrous fabrics, taffetas, and other stiff fabrics.
- Plaids, or large or outstanding surface pattern.
- Heavy, bulky fabrics.
- Fabrics that take round lines.
- Bright colours in large areas.
- Unnecessarily full, long garments.
- Foundation garments that produce bulges above and below the garment.
- Very full or tight garments.
- Ruffles.
- Horizontal movement in the lines of the dress.
- Exaggerated curves or angles, for the curves repeat the lines if the figure and the angles contradict them, therefore both call attention to the size.
- Very wide or extremely narrow panels.
- Panels, pleats or overskirts that spread or flutter as one walks,
- Pleats, panels, or any trimming ending or starting at a point where the figure is large.
- Very narrow lines of trimming.
- Thin piping.
- Fluffy fichus.
- Large circles on hats or dresses.

- Short skirts.
- Skirts which flare all around.
- Yokes on skirts.
- A high waist line, since it makes the waist appear broader.
- An extremely long waist line, for it makes the upper part of the figure too heavy for the lower part.
- Belts or sashes which are conspicuous in width or in colour.
- Entire sleeve tightly fitted.
- Flowing sleeves.
- Transparent sleeves.
- Sleeves lighter than the dress.
- Kimono sleeves which give an effect of breadth, owing to looseness under the arm.
- Ribbons or trimming extending beyond or hanging from the sleeves.
- Sleeves ending at a place of unusual width on the figure.
- Wide, light cuffs on a dark dress for the eye will travel across the figure, adding width.
- Tight broad collars or short collars.
- Short jackets that contrast with the skirt.
- Freakish or conspicuous shoes.
- Shoes with slender, high heels.
- Small hats.
- Big hats.
- Flat hats.
- Round hats.
- Hats with long lines or brims drooping on both sides.
- Contrasting colours and values in hats, hose, and shoes.
- A low or broad style in hair dressing.
- Small tight waves or “bushy” hair.
- Thin or very small pieces of jewellery.
- Tiny trimmings for hats and dresses.
- Very small accessories.

Long Waists, Slender Figure

Suitable

- The effect of a slight blouse at the underarm seam.
- Long lines in the skirt.



Unsuitable

- A long, diagonal line in the waist.
- Tight bodice.

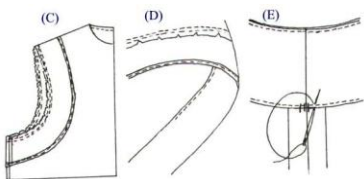
Narrow Shoulders

Suitable

- Padded or broadened shoulders.
- Broad lines in yokes, collars, and lapels.
- Armhole seams placed slightly out (or lower than normal)

Unsuitable

- A panel or vest effect that starts wide at the waist or hips and becomes narrower toward the neck. This makes a triangle with the point at the neck and the base at the waist and hips, thus narrowing the shoulders and broadening the waists and hips.
- Armhole seams placed higher or farther in than normal.



Broad Shoulders

Suitable

- Lengthwise pleats, folds, or tucks extending from the shoulders to the waist, placed somewhat toward the centre line in order to narrow rather than broaden the figure.
- Hat with a relatively high crown and a fairly wide brim

Unsuitable

- Wide or horizontal structural lines in yokes, collars, and lapels
- Very small hats.

Round Shoulders

Suitable

- Set-in sleeves.
- The shoulder seam placed about one-half inch back of the normal shoulder line.
- Collars that will appear to straighten the curve of the back. Either have the collar long enough to hang loose from the neck to below the highest point of the curve, or have it short enough to fill in the space between the neck and the beginning of the curve. Then build out the waist line by having the waist full and loose in order to fill in below the prominent curve. This may be done by the use of a panel that hangs from the neck to the waist, turning back under a loose belt, or by the use of a bolero jacket.

Unsuitable

- Kimono sleeves
- Raglan sleeves
- Collars that end at the curve of the back.
- Collarless dresses that are tight at the waist line
- Hat with a long dropping brim in back that forms a continuous line between the crown and the curve of the shoulders.

Large Busts

Suitable

- Panels or vests
- Silhouette built out at waist and hips if not already large.
- A yoke line, jewellery, or some other conspicuous line that stops above or below the bust line.
- Long flat collars and jabots.

Unsuitable

- The waist line drawn in.
- High fitted waist,
- Wide belts.
- Trimming at, or near, the bust line.

Flat Chests

Suitable

- Full, soft collars.
- Jabots and fichus.
- Fullness over the chest by means of tucking or shirring the material into the shoulder seam.

Unsuitable

- Tight waist

Large Hips

Suitable

- Emphasis up and down the centre front of the dress.
- Oblique lines from hem to waist that end slightly at one side of the centre front.
- Narrow belt placed slightly below natural waist line.
- Average amount of fullness in the skirt.
- The skirt flared slightly from the hips.

- The skirt blouse at the waist line.

Unsuitable

- A one-piece, belt less dress hanging straight from the shoulders.
- Pockets at the hip line.
- Horizontal lines on the skirt placed near the hip line.
- short skirts
- tight skirts
- very full skirts
- Skirts that are narrowest at the hem
- Tight, closely fitted waist

Large Abdomens

Suitable

- Waist slightly loosed
- Coats that build out the sides of the figure.

Unsuitable

- Waist and upper part of skirt fitted tightly.
- Sash or belt tied at the centre front.

Small Faces

If a person has a small face, it might seem out of proportion to the rest of the body. If this is the case that person must wear a rather small hat. Large and rather "showy" trimming on the hat will make the face appear even smaller by contrast. The principles you have learned in the study of proportion will come into play here to solve this problem.

Suitable

- Hat that are rather small
- Trimmings that is rather fine in texture and in scale.
- A relatively small hair dress.

Unsuitable

- Large hats.
- Heavy hats.
- Too large a hair dress, for, by contrast, it will make the face seem too small

LARGE FACES

Suitable

- Hats sufficiently large to form an adequate frame for the face.
- A hair dress of moderate size.

Unsuitable

- Hats smaller than the widest part of the face.
- Trimmings that is too small.
- Too large a hair dress, since it may make the head look too heavy for the body.
- Too small a hair dress, which will emphasize the size of the face.

Squares or Broad Face

Suitable

- Hat with an irregular line.
- Hair dressed rather high and with a soft, irregular line.
- Rouge placed in toward the centre of the face and blended up and down.

Unsuitable

- Lines in the hat or at the neck that repeat the lines of the face.
- Lines that oppose the lines of the face
- Hair dressed wide over the ears.
- Hair parted in the middle.

Round Face

Suitable

- Collar or scarf worn close to the neck in back and with a long line in front
- Necklines that give an oval effect.
- Hats with slightly irregular effects.
- Hats with lines that carry the eye upward.
- Rouge placed rather high toward the nose and blended down.
- Hair worn in an irregular line.
- Ears covered unless neck is short.
- In that case leave the lower part of the ear exposed.
- Hair parted toward the side and arranged in an irregular line.
- Hair dressed high.

Unsuitable

- Hats with round shapes and lines that repeat the curves of the face.
- Hair parted in the centre and drawn tightly back.
- Hair dressed wide over the ears.
- Hair dressed in rounded shapes and lines.

Narrow Pointer Face

Suitable

- Short necklaces.
- Hat with medium-sized brim.
- Hat with slightly drooping brim.
- Hair worn low on the forehead and in soft irregular lines.
- Moderate size in hair dress.
- Hair worn back from the cheeks.
- Rouge placed high out on the cheek bone and blended toward the nose and quit close to the hair.

Unsuitable

- High hats.
- Tall, angular trimmings.

- Hair worn in a high, pointer knot at the top of the head.
- Hair so dressed as to cover some of the cheeks.

Prominent Chin and Jaw

Suitable

- Rather large hats.
- Hats with soft, irregular lines.
- Hair worn in a large mass at the top of the head and wide at the sides, above the ears.
- Rough placed high on the cheeks and toward the nose.

Unsuitable

- Small hats.
- Severely tailored hats.
- Hair puffed out below the ears.

Receding Chin and Small Jaw

Suitable

- Hats of average size.
- A hat with a brim.
- A very small amount of rouge on each side of the chin.
- Small hair dress.
- Hair worn low at the neck.

Unsuitable

- Large hats.
- Hats that turn sharply away from the face.
- Hair dressed to widen the upper part of the head and face.

Prominent Foreheads

Suitable

- Hat with a brim.
- Hat worn low on the head.
- Hair dressed low over the forehead to conceal some of it.
- A broken irregular line in the hair dress.

Unsuitable

- Hair pulled straight back from the forehead.
- Hair dressed wide over the ears and temples.

Low Foreheads

Suitable

- Hair drawn back from the forehead.
- Hair dressed rather high.

Unsuitable

- Hair parted in the middle.

Large Waist and Hips

If the person has large waist and hips which are out of proportion to the rest of the figure, then he/she must dress in such a way as to attract the interest away from that defect. The head should be made a centre of interest; to achieve this dress should be so constructed that it carries eyes towards the head.

Suitable

- Built-out shoulders.
- The centre of interest kept at the face and away from the waist and hips
- Long skirts, in order to add height.
- Hats of average size or slightly larger

Unsuitable

- Broad panel effects.
- Sashes or wide girdles
- Small hats.

Short Waists

If the proportion of figure from waist to the neck is shorter than the average, then while making a dress you will lower the waistline below the normal position, it will improve the proportions of figure. The short-waist woman, otherwise, will present a clumsy, awkward, bulky appearance.

She should avoid yoke lines or cross trimming lines that tend to cut the figure in two, and also tight belts at the waistline. Instead, her silhouette should be based on long, slightly pointed lines that carry the eye down rather than around the figure. It should be remembered that long, vertical lines give the appearance of great height and slimness. The straight up-and-down silhouette is by all means the best for this type of figure.

Suitable

- Waist line dropped below the normal line, especially for people whose hips are low

Unsuitable

- Built-up waist lines

Low Waists

On the other hand, if measurements from the waist to the neckline are longer than the average, raise the waistline and you will notice a great improvement in the looks of the dress.

Long Necks

Doubtless she was wearing a very flat collar or a dress having a V neckline which so emphasised the fact as to bring it to your attention. If this person had but known that a fluffy collar or one having a soft roll would greatly detract from this effect it is very likely you never would have noticed it.

Suitable

- Collars with high or medium roll.
- Round neck lines, especially those which fit closely to the base of the neck
- Fluffy collars or fichus or furs.
- High close collars
- Scarfs
- Short necklaces, especially bulky ones.
- Hair worn low at the neck Hair worn over the ears.

Unsuitable

- Collarless, without a necklace.
- V-necks.
- Hat with upturned brim
- Hat with high trimming
- Hair worn high

High-Hipped

The short-yoke effect dress tends to emphasise the "bad point" of the high-hip figure. The waistline should be so located that it imparts a well-balanced appearance to the figure. About three inches below the normal waistline is usually the correct place for the belt or waistline. A straight vertical silhouette from the shoulders to the low waistline terminating in a full-pleated or shirred skirt is the most suitable style for this figure.

Sway Back

Suitable

- Blouse at back of waist.
- Fullness between the waist line and the hips.
- Belts which swing from loops at the side and which do not hug the waist line too closely.
- Devices which build out the waist line in the back, as bows.
- Thick jackets.

Unsuitable

- Garments fitted tightly in the back, including tightly belted dresses.

Short or Thick Neck

Suitable

- Flat collars.
- Collarless dresses.
- V-necks.
- Flat furs.
- Narrow-brimmed hats.
- Hair dressed high.
- Hair worn to show the ears, or at least the base of the ears.

Unsuitable

- Collars with high roll
- Broad neck lines
- Necklace worn close around the throat.
- Drooping hats.
- Hats with broad brims

Retrouse Noses

Suitable

- A hat with a brim.
- Lines of the hair that do not repeat the line of the nose.

Unsuitable

- A hat that turns away from the face.

Prominent Noses

Suitable

- Hat with a brim. The brim may be somewhat wider in the front.
- Trimming in the front of the hat.
- Hair built out in a soft, rather large mass.
- Hair built out over the forehead, in order to balance the nose.
- Hair parted on the side.

Unsuitable

- Turbans.
- Severe, tailored hats.
- Hair parted in the middle.
- Hair drawn straight back from the forehead.
- Hair dressed high on the head.
- The large mass of the hair directly opposite the nose. So that the eye moves across that line when the profile is seen.

Sharp Angular Features

Suitable

- Hats of medium size.
- Irregular lines in the hat.
- A brim that droops very slightly.
- Hair worn in a soft, irregular line. Soft large waves in the hair.

Unsuitable

- Severely tailored hats.
- Sharp, angular trimmings, as wings, quills, and sharp bows.
- Stiff fabrics.
- Harsh textures.
- Hair drawn severely back.
- Hair in tight waves, because it emphasises by contrast.

Large Features

Suitable

- Hair worn in a broken line around the face.
- hair worn smooth in large, loose waves
- coiffure rather large

Unsuitable

- Hair curled in small, close waves
- hair drawn tightly back
- Coiffure extremely large

Suggested Further Readings:

- **Fashion Design Essentials: 100 Principles of Fashion Design (By Jay Calderin)**
- **Introduction to Fashion Design (By Patrick John)**