

South Dakota State University
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional
Repository and Information Exchange**

Extension Circulars

SDSU Extension

1-1930

Designing Your Own Costume

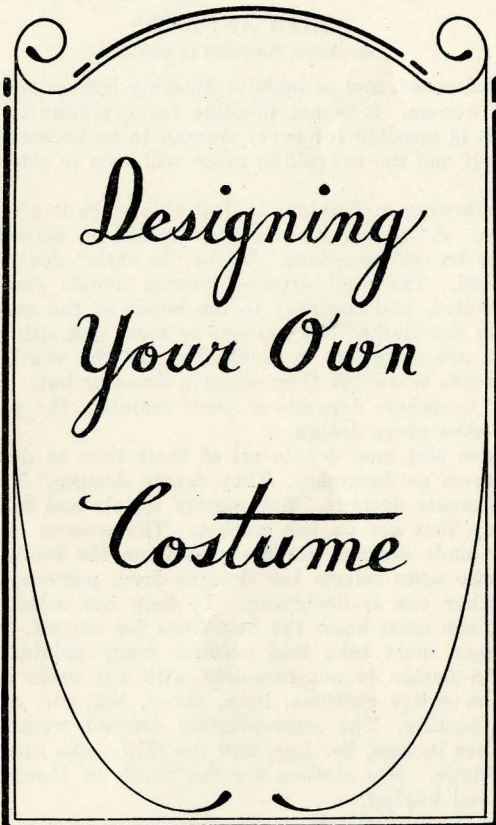
Anita Andrews

Follow this and additional works at: http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_circ

Recommended Citation

Andrews, Anita, "Designing Your Own Costume" (1930). *Extension Circulars*. Paper 284.
http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_circ/284

This Circular is brought to you for free and open access by the SDSU Extension at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Extension Circulars by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.



*Designing
Your Own
Costume*

EXTENSION SERVICE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS
BROOKINGS, S.D.

DESIGNING YOUR OWN COSTUME

ANITA ANDREWS

Extension Specialist in Clothing

To be well dressed, and to make a pleasing appearance is the wish of almost every woman. It is not possible for everyone to be expensively dressed, but it is possible for every woman to be becomingly dressed. A study of herself and the prevailing mode will help to select clothes which are becoming.

Sensible following of fashions is desirable since it gives pleasure and self assurance. A woman who is not dressed in accordance with the mode is apt to be self conscious. To be "in style" does not mean to be fadishly dressed. The well dressed woman avoids fads. Her clothes are wisely selected, and contrary to the hopes of the manufacturer, she is able to wear her clothes two seasons or more and still be in style.

All women are designers in some sense of the word. They are designing a costume whenever they select a dress or hat. Whether or not they are good designers depends on their training, the practice, and the thought they have given design.

Some women and men devote all of their time to designing. These people are known as designers. They create designs. The average woman need not create designs. She merely selects and assembles designs from the many that are on the market. The woman who buys her dresses ready-made designs her costume from the ready-to-wear stock. The woman who sews selects her designs from patterns or dresses she has seen. Either one is designing. To help her select designs which are becoming, she must know the best lines for herself.

This designer must take into account many points. She must remember that a design is not complete with the dress alone. The observer sees the entire costume, hose, shoes, hat, etc. and he sees the costume in a setting. The appropriately dressed woman will consider the occasion, her income, her age, and the things she already has as she selects new things. Her clothes are the result of thoughtful and careful selecting and buying.

The Appropriately Dressed Woman

The costume must be suitable for the occasion. No matter how becoming a costume may be, if it does not suit the occasion, it is inappropriate. There are types of clothes for different times of day. Some costumes are such that they may be worn for several occasions. The conservative buyer will choose this type. A sports costume may be suitable for the class room or street, but would look very inappropriate at the dinner table.

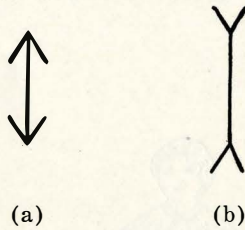
Expensive clothes are not always in good taste. Often the woman with fewer clothes is better dressed than the woman with many for she selects hers with greater care. Becoming clothes may be found that can be purchased for the price one can afford to pay. The woman who dresses beyond her income shows poor taste and judgment.

The well dressed woman considers her age in selecting clothes. The older woman does not attempt to wear clothes that were designed for

the young figure. A dress can rarely be smart that is not first becoming.

The appropriate and becoming costume accentuates the best points of the wearer and draws attention away from the less attractive. The well dressed woman analyzes herself and studies her figure and type. After this analysis she decides which lines are best for her. The clever woman makes the most of the phenomena of optical illusions:

Notice how much longer line (b) is made to appear.



This same principle may be carried into dress. The tall or thin figure may want to use the principle in (a). The short or stout, the principle in (b).

It is not always necessary to make use of these facilities. Is your tallness or smallness an asset? It may be; study your personality and type. If it is, dress to make it an asset. Clothes must not call too much attention to themselves and overshadow personality.

Types of Personalities

It is difficult to classify women according to personalities, since no two persons are exactly alike. Personality is defined as that which constitutes distinction of person or individuality. Yet with all this variety in traits and characteristics, most women can be classified in one of three classes. Some women are typical of one while others may be a combination of two types.

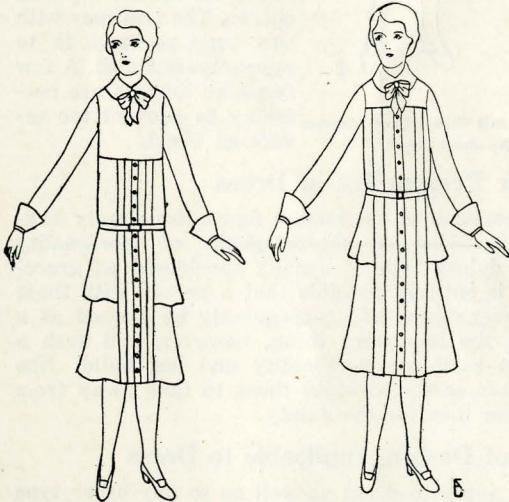


Fig. 1.—Nice proportion, developed by uneven spaces, lends interest to the costume

skin. However, women of this class will have other colorings.

The Dramatic Personality.—Women of this class are characterized by dignity, poise, strength and sincerity. “While women of this type are usually tall, well proportioned, and free and easy of movement, they vary

Others seem to be gay, busy, and sparkling. The word quaint describes others. Others may make the observer think of a fragile piece of china. Members of this type usually find bright and dainty colors suitable for them. The dainty type usually has light hair and fair

The Dainty Personality. This class is described as the dainty or ingenue type. Women of this class are sweet and loveable. Others seem to be gay, busy, and sparkling. The word quaint describes others. Others may make the observer think of a fragile piece of china. Members of this type usually find bright and dainty colors suitable for them. The dainty type usually has light hair and fair

in build as—tall, slender, and willowy—tall, stout and active—narrow shoulders and wide hips—wide shoulders and narrow hips—medium height and stout, short and stocky.”

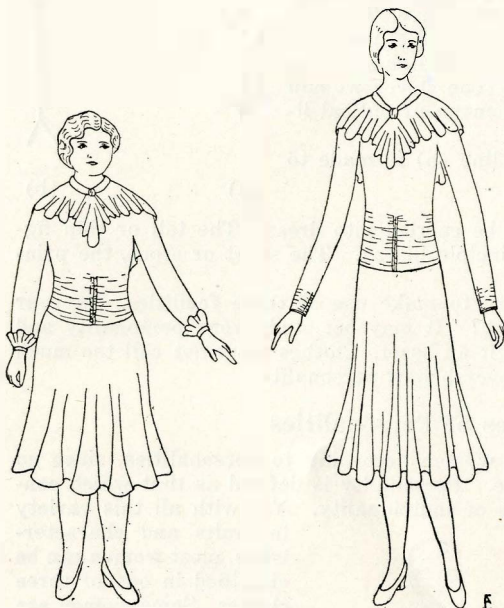


Fig. 2.—A dress designed for the tall thin figure, cannot be successfully worn by the short stout.

From the wide variety of personal colorings, dark, straight hair seems most characteristic. Women in this class find their best colors in the rich warm colors. Materials should be good and the lines of the garments more tailored and severe.

Athletic Personality. — Women of this class are usually described as being boyish or mannish. They are very active and this characteristic calls for a type of dress which will lend itself to this activity. Women of this type are probably at their best in a sports costume. They need very few accessories and these should be well chosen. The tendency with this type, perhaps, is to appear too mannish. A few feminine touches are necessary to prevent too severe an effect.

Express your Personality in Dress

Personality and the proportions of the human figure are closely linked. However, the figures described as characteristic of personality types, do vary. While the dainty type is usually considered as graceful and small in stature, it is entirely possible that a person with these personality traits may be overweight and consequently be classed as a short stout. Personality is the important thing, however, and such a person should dress to suit both her personality and her build. She does not want, by wearing too severe straight lines, to take away from her feminine qualities and her love for the dainty.

Art Principles of Design Applicable to Dress

Art principles of design apply to dress as well as to any other type of design. Two sets of lines are employed in building any costume. They are structural and decorative lines. Clothes must embody each kind. Structural lines change the figure and correct imperfections. Decorative lines add importance and charm to the most beautiful features of the costume and figure. Both sets of lines demand consideration in planning a costume.

Proportion.—Lines which cut the dress into space may be either structural or decorative. Spaces that are unequal are more interesting than spaces that are the same size. A dress with a belt line so placed that the waist and skirt are not the same length is more interesting than one in which they are equal.

The Greek law of proportion states that "Two lines or areas are interesting and desirable when one is between one-half and two-thirds the length of the other."

Not only is proportion in line necessary to make a pleasing effect but also a good proportion in color. That is, generally speaking, the largest spaces should be of some soft color while the small spaces are of some bright intense color. The effect is spoiled if the largest areas are of the bright and the smallest areas of the cool grayed colors. The bright color overshadows the grayed color and a balance is not secured.

Balance.—Besides a balance in color it is necessary to have a feeling of balance or rest in the entire costume. When a dress has been designed so that both sides are alike it is said to be in formal balance. Balance is not always formal. A feeling of rest may be secured by informal balance. In a costume the balancing factors may be called interests and probably can best be explained by suggesting a "teeter-totter." The smaller and brighter the interest it, the nearer it must be to the center in order to balance a larger interest farther away from the center, e. g., a bright flower worn on the shoulder near the face may balance a pocket or group of pleats on the side of the skirt.

Repetition. — Repetition of line in a costume strengthens that line and adds to the unity of the costume as a whole. Repetition of an undesirable line will be strengthened in the same way. For this reason the stout figure must avoid curves. Curved lines tend to make her appear more round by the repetition. The costume becomes more unified by repeating the same type of line. For example, if scallops are used on the skirt of a dress a round neckline would be more suitable than a square or pointed line at the neck.

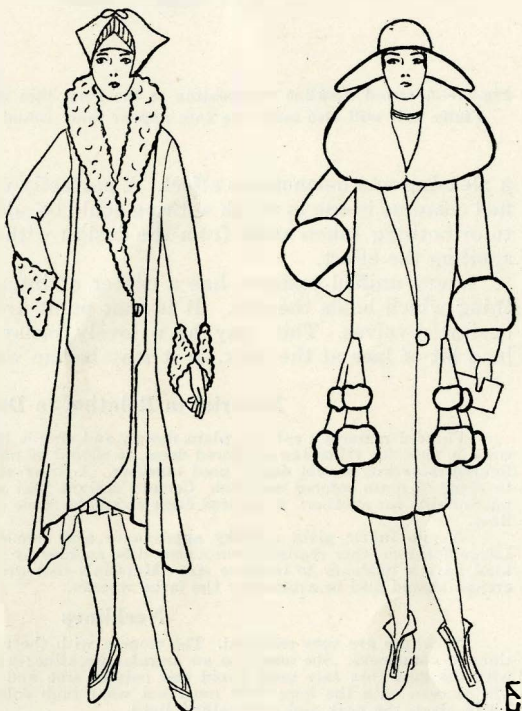


Fig. 3.—The figures are the same. Note the apparent difference in height.

Unity may be secured by repetition of line and color. The color of a bit of decoration on a dress may be repeated in the hat, thus making

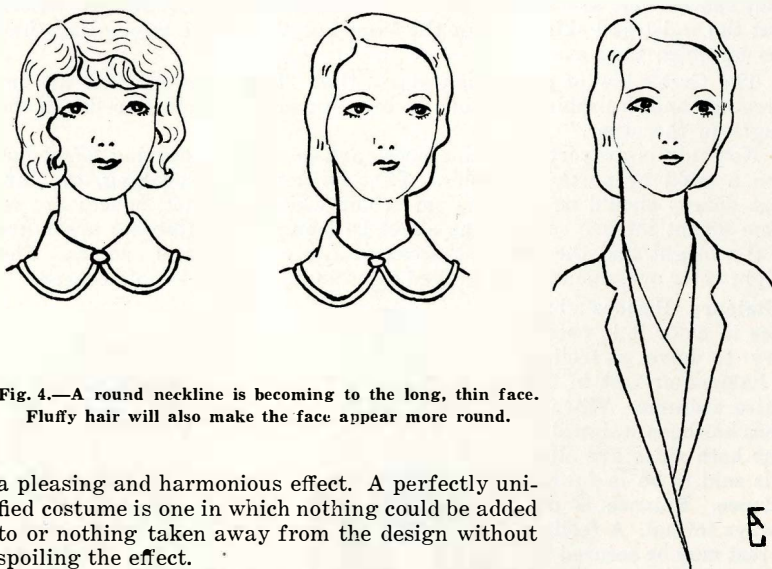


Fig. 4.—A round neckline is becoming to the long, thin face. Fluffy hair will also make the face appear more round.

a pleasing and harmonious effect. A perfectly unified costume is one in which nothing could be added to or nothing taken away from the design without spoiling the effect.

Every unified costume has a center of interest. This center is something which holds the eye. It is that point around which the rest of the design revolves. This may be a lovely ornament at the waist, it may be a bit of lace at the neck, or it may be the wearer's pretty head.

Material in Relation to Design

Figured materials call for plain design and simple lines in the dress. If contrasting color is used for trimming a figured dress, it should be plain and of a simple weave. Two figured materials should not be used together. A dress with many structural lines should be made of plain colored material. Certain designs that are suitable for one material are not suitable for another. A tailored dress should be made of material that suggests straight lines.

A pile fabric gives a bulky appearance and should not be worn by large people. Large floral or other realistic prints should be avoided by the stout woman. Figures of any kind have a tendency to increase size. Materials that are very glossy, as satin and satin crepes, should also be avoided by the large woman.

Necklines

Necklines are very essential. The woman with the round face must avoid all suggestions of roundness. She must use an angular neckline; a pointed line is best. The woman with the long thin face must avoid this pointed line and confine herself to round shapes. The woman with the long neck must not wear high collars, but soft rolling ones which fill in about the neck and give rolling lines.

Ornament

The essential part of constructing a costume is the structural lines. Ornaments may strengthen or weaken these lines. Wise choice in selection of accessory ornaments, however, adds much to some costumes.

A lovely string of beads may enhance an otherwise rather dull looking ensemble.

Use of ornaments when not needed is bad. Too many ornaments such as buckles and pins that do not harmonize, detract. The well-dressed woman wears few or no ornaments.

Suggestions for Types of Figures

The woman who has analyzed her figure and decided the class to which she belongs may find some helps in the following suggestions.

Average Figure

The average or the medium sized woman does not have the problems that the stout or overly thin woman does. Ready-made garments fit her more easily, and she does not have to rely on illusions. Her problem, however, is to dress to bring out the best in her personality. Her greatest trouble is to avoid being commonplace.

Stout Figure

The problem of the stout woman is to clothe herself to give an appearance of slenderness. A careful study of the following table may help her in selecting becoming lines.

Becoming

1. Long vertical lines continued from head to toe.
2. Diagonal lines carefully used.
3. Same color in accessories, especially in hat and hose as in costume.
4. Draperies should come from shoulder rather than waist.
5. Simple neck lines, preferably pointed if shape of face permits.
6. Set-in sleeve.
7. One color fabrics, dull in finish.
Soft subdued colors.
8. Panels, not too wide.
9. Flat, short-haired fur.

Unbecoming

1. Broken lines—such as different colors in skirt and waist.
2. Horizontal lines.
3. Light or bright hose with dark shoes.
4. Ruffles, large cuffs, and curves of all kinds.
5. Round necklines and large round beads.
6. Appearing too large for clothes—tight sleeves and tight skirts.
7. Spotty patterned material, shiny surfaces bright colors.
8. Broad tucks or stripes.
9. High heeled shoes appearing to give insufficient support.

Thin Figure

The thin figure presents almost the opposite problems of the stout woman. Her problem is to make her figure appear rounded, by softening the angles. She will find suggestions in the accompanying list.

Becoming

1. Curves, scallops, etc.
2. Ruffles, and fluffiness.
3. Close fitting, round collared neckline.
4. Beads
5. Sashes
6. Lustrous material and stiff fabrics.

Unbecoming

1. Perpendicular lines, sleeveless dresses.
2. Severely tailored things.
3. Pointed necklines.
4. Long narrow skirts.
5. Black costume.

References

How to Dress Well, Margaret Story
Art in Everyday Life, Goldstein
Design in Dress, Iowa State College Bulletin

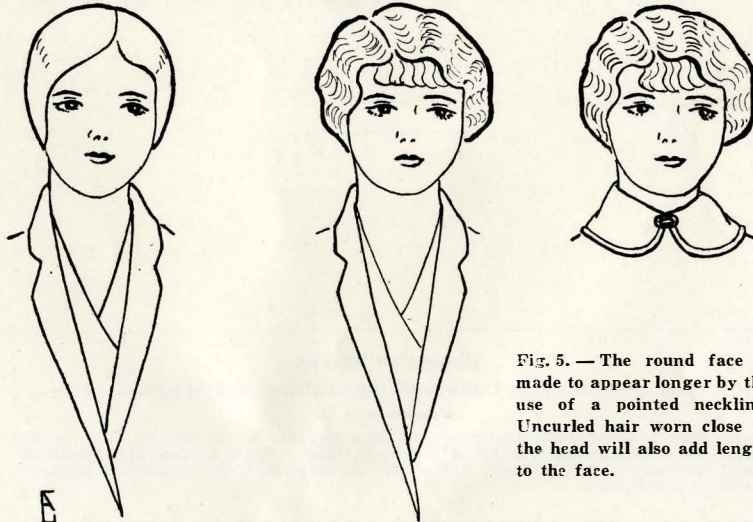


Fig. 5. — The round face is made to appear longer by the use of a pointed neckline. Uncurled hair worn close to the head will also add length to the face.

SELF ANALYSIS CHART

Designing Your Own Costume

Check the words that most nearly describe you. Check two, if combination.

A. Type	dramatic _____	B. Coloring	blonde _____
	dainty _____		dark brunette _____
	athletic _____		light brunette _____
C. Figure			auburn _____
	average _____		intermediate _____
	tall thin _____		gray _____
	short thin _____	Shoulders	broad _____
	tall stout _____		narrow _____
	short stout _____		square _____
Face			sloping _____
	oval _____		average _____
	long thin _____	Hips	average _____
	round _____		large _____
	square _____		too small _____
	pointed chin _____	E. My shoes and hose:	Should be same color _____
	receding chin _____		as dress _____
	average _____		May be contrasting _____
D. In the clothes I select I wish to make myself appear:			color _____
	1. average _____		Hose may be light _____
	2. taller _____		with light shoes _____
	3. shorter _____		Hose may be light _____
	4. smaller _____		with dark shoes _____
	5. larger _____		Hose may be dark _____
	6. at my best _____		with dark shoes _____
F. Lines that are best for me:			
	Straight vertical lines _____	Fluffy collars _____	Round neckline _____
	Horizontal lines _____	Tiered skirt _____	Square neckline _____
	Tailored lines _____	Tucks _____	V shaped _____
	Big cuffs _____	Plaits _____	With collar _____
	Ruffles _____	Wide sashes _____	Without collar _____

Extension Service

South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts

Brookings, S. D.

Published and distributed under Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Agricultural Extension Service of the South Dakota State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, Brookings, A. E. Anderson, director, U. S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.