

DO'S AND DON'TS OF WEDDING DRESS SHOPPING

We all have things we'd like to change about our bodies if we could. Since we can't, it's best to work with what we've got when it comes to wedding gowns. Make a positive ID on your body type here to find out what flatters your figure best.

You're Petite

Dress Dos: It's best to keep it simple. A column-like sheath or A-line dress will work well -- these shapes create a long uninterrupted line. Stick to open, sexier necklines: Think strapless and off-the-shoulder styles. **Dress Don'ts:** Steer clear of big ball gowns and dresses with voluminous fabric, as they might look like they're wearing you.

You're Bony

Dress Dos: A ball gown will make you look like a beautiful ballerina. It's a very feminine shape that will balance out your overall silhouette. Try one with a dramatic cutout back or portrait neckline. The sheath is a shape that was made for you. **Dress Don'ts:** If you're concerned your collarbone is too prominent, don't choose portrait, off-the-shoulder, or halter necklines. And if you're also flat chested, avoid a darted bodice made of stiff fabric.

You're Pear Shaped

Dress Dos: A strapless ball gown will cover your bottom half and focus on your better half; an off-the-shoulder neckline will make your top look more in proportion to your bottom. **Dress Don'ts:** A sheath can be unflattering, and a V-neck will draw the eyes downward, where you don't want them to go.

You're Broad

Dress Dos: Expose your beautiful shoulders with a halter, or go for drama in a gown with long off-the-shoulder sleeves. Select a dress with a narrow bodice that offsets your shoulders and helps create an hourglass shape. **Dress Don'ts:** Trying to conceal your shoulders is not recommended -- it sometimes produces the opposite effect -- though avoid off-the-shoulder necklines, which produce a widening effect in the place you don't want it.

You're Full-Figured

Dress Dos: Try a ball gown with a basque waist, which has a slimming effect. A high-waist A-line with a low neckline also flatters curves. **Dress Don'ts:** A slim sheath or slinky bias cut will cling and may accent any extra inches; avoid spaghetti straps.

You're Busty (Hourglass)

Dress Dos: Accentuate the positive with an uplifting foundation garment and an off-the-shoulder bodice. Or curtail your curves with a one-piece minimizer worn under a gown that boasts a fitted bodice to emphasize your waist. Balance it all off with a full skirt. **Dress Don'ts:** Be careful not to over do the bareness -- you want the focus to be on your face. Keep away from a jewel neckline, which will make you appear bustier.



You're Tall

Dress Dos: Tall women look great in everything from sheaths (if you're also slim) to A-lines and full ball gowns. Accentuate your collarbone with a fitted bodice and open neckline. Dress Don'ts: Skip gowns that boast high necklines and long sleeves, and steer clear of updos and headpieces that add too much extra height.

You're Boxy

Dress Dos: Empire-waist gowns are made with you in mind. And a ball gown with a basque waist will give you the nipped-in look you crave. Dress Don'ts: Steer clear of sheaths and dropped waists, which will make you look even boxier.

You're Short-Waisted

Dress Dos: A princess-line silhouette, fitted at the bodice and opening up gradually to a full skirt, will elegantly elongate your figure. If you're comfortable with your shoulders, try a portrait or halter neckline. Dress Don'ts: Avoid a sheath -- its long, lean column shape may draw unwanted attention to your short waist.

You're Thick-Waisted

Dress Dos: The high waist of an empire gown will de-emphasize your waistline and provide a long, slimming look. Dress Don'ts: Stay away from a princess-line or basque waist, which will draw too much attention to your middle.