

MAKING THE RIGHT FIRST IMPRESSION:

Let Your Dress Style Convey Your Personality

When you're out in the dating world, one of the easiest ways to show your personality without saying a word, is through your style of dress. The image you project as you walk through a door can immediately set the right tone, or not. So take control of that first impression.

To be sure you're projecting an image in keeping with your true personality and body type, consider the following style categories. These are general guidelines and not strict rules. Some of you will be predominantly one category, while many of you will be a blend of two categories. If you're not sure, your image consultant can help you pinpoint your style.

Romantic – For women, this style is characterized by soft, flowing lines, ruffles and lettuce edging, dresses with floral patterns or empire waists, ribbon and bow adornments, long skirts with gathers and unconstructed billowy blouses with embroidery. Vintage style clothing, such as lacy Victorian dresses, is often romantic.

Romantic colors fall into two categories: soft pastels of rose and lilac and muted tones of white, or bold and rich jewel tones like lapis or cranberry. Fabrics include taffeta, satin, lace, velvet, chiffon, crinkly gauze, dotted Swiss and cotton eyelet. People who embody romantic dressing include: Stevie Nicks, Drew Barrymore and Jennifer Love Hewitt.

Physical characteristics of people suited to a romantic style are often of moderate to petite height (under 5'5"), with a soft and voluptuous, hourglass figure. Facial bones are small, delicate, and may be slightly wide or lush. Romantics have large, luminous eyes, full lips and fleshy cheeks. Hair is soft and luxurious, or may be silky and wispy, or thick and wavy/curly. Romantics usually have a delicate skin tone that is luminous or translucent.

Romantic Designers: Oscar de la Renta, Nanette Lapore, Diane Von Furstenberg, Dolce & Gabbana, Yves Saint Laurent, Zac Posen, Betsy Johnson

Dramatic -- This style is the opposite of soft, unconstructed romantics. It's all about dramatic contrast in pattern, color and angles. A woman like Victoria Beckham projects Hollywood drama while a woman like Gwen Stefani consistently epitomizes edgy downtown cool. Clothes often feature contrasting black and white or bold hues like red and royal purple. Eye-catching jewelry, sun glasses and accessories finish this dynamic

look. The Dramatic dresser wants to make a statement and often wants people to know that how they look is important.

Typical physical characteristics for the dramatic style include moderate height up to 5'7" and symmetrical bone structure with slightly angular edges. A Dramatic may have slightly sharp, angular or squared facial contours, with moderate to large eyes and moderate lips. Dramatic women tend to have hair that is thick and straight, fine and silky, but rarely coarse. Some women may have wavy/curly hair.

Body type is fairly trim and compact, slightly muscular, with a bustline, waist, and hips that are somewhat straight and in even proportion when at an ideal weight. Some women may be slightly short-waisted, and arms and legs are average or slightly long. Shoulders are tapered or slightly squared and usually narrow. Dramatic women tend to gain weight from the waist down, getting more pear-shaped when they put on weight.

Dramatic Designers: Gwen Stefani, Versace, Tory Burch, Dior, Donna Karan, Thakoon, Prada, Pucci

Classic – Ralph Lauren advertisements personify the polished classic look. Both Jennifer Aniston and Hillary Clinton fit this style. Senator John Edwards is a male example of this look (although his wife Elizabeth is a Romantic Classic). The look is clean, elegant, tailored. This refined and unfussy look appeals to a large cross section of people. Classic colors like black, navy, camel and other neutrals are prevalent, along with tartans, herringbone, and plaid. Featured fabrics are classic cotton, wool, silk and shimmery metallics. One piece of eye-catching jewelry might complement blue jeans and a classic t-shirt. Classics rarely look as though they tried too hard to look fashionable. They tend to be casually chic.

Women who choose this classic style are often between 5'4" and 5'7" tall, with evenly proportioned bust, waist and hips, and moderate to slightly long limbs. They may be slightly muscled and have tapered shoulders. Facial features are chiseled and symmetrical with a tendency toward a slight sharpness. Moderate thick hair is smooth and may be straight, wavy or slightly curly. Coloring tends to be blended or low-contrast coloring.

Classic designers: Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Carolina Herrera, Giorgio Armani, Ella Tahari, Donna Karan, Kenneth Cole, Anne Klein, Diane Von Furstenberg, Hugo Boss, Dior

Natural – He starred in a movie called “The Natural” and Robert Redford is a perfect example of natural style, as is Lance Armstrong. Natural style can be outdoorsy or athletic or down-to-earth with a sense of playfulness. Cameron Diaz, Ali McGraw and

Gabrielle Reece are all Naturals. Active wear that takes you from yoga class to lunch with friends may be your dressing preference. Like classic clothes, this style of dress tends to be straightforward and unfussy. As you would expect Naturals prefer natural fabrics like cotton and denim, linen and corduroy, raw silk and wool, hemp and bamboo.

Ethnic influences in clothes fall into this category as seen in ponchos and mandarin jackets, as do animal prints in blouses and skirts. Knubby textured knit pieces are often Natural. Clothes in the Natural color follow an earthen palette: mustard, olive, warm creams and beiges, terra cotta and rich browns, charcoal gray and deep ocean blues, and black and white. Naturals are comfortable in their own skin and consider it important that their clothing reflects how they live in the world.

Physical characteristics of the natural body type for women is moderate to slightly tall, up to 5'8". The natural dresser tends to have a lean and muscular body with flat hips and a slightly flat bustline, with a longer-waist. Arms and legs may be longer than average and shoulders are broad.

Facial contours for nose jaw and cheekbones are bluntly angular. Eyes are moderate to small and lips are straight and slightly thin. Hair is frequently moderate to thick and tends to have a slightly matte finish as opposed to silky sheen. Any coloring is possible (warm or cool), although Naturals frequently have low-contrast or blended coloring with skin that tends to suntan easily

Natural Designers: Eileen Fisher, Ralph Lauren, Jil Sanders

Some examples of combination styles:

Romantic Classic: Oprah Winfrey, Reese Witherspoon, Elizabeth Edwards, Christie Brinkley

Romantic Dramatic: Beyonce, Jessica Parker, Penelope Cruz

Natural Romantic: Lindsay Wagner

Classic Natural: Julia Roberts, Jody Foster, Michelle Pfeiffer

Dramatic Natural: David Beckham

Dramatic Classic: Angelina Jolie, Catherine Zeta-Jones

[set apart: perhaps boxed]

Where to Shop for Your Style:

Romantic: Anthropologie, Talbots, Target, Cache, White House/Black Market, Victoria's Secret



“love your look”

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Dramatic: Tory Burch, Dolce & Gabbana, Chico, Bebe, Barneys New York, BCBG Max Mara, White House/Black Market, Versace, Club Monaco, Express, Anthropologie

Classic: Dior, Ann Taylor, Talbots, J. Crew, Banana Republic, Theory, Tory Burch, Chanel, Donna Karan, Kenneth Cole, Anne Klein, Jones New York, Chico's, Target, Bebe, Eileen Fisher, Chico's, Cole Haan, Benetton, Club Monaco, Express

Natural: J. Jill, Target, Tweeds, Eileen Fisher, Chico's, Eddie Bauer, Bryn Walker, J. Crew, Benetton, Cold Water Creek, Max Mara, Urban Outfitters, Garnett Hill catalog, Gaiam.com, EarthSpeaks.com, L.L. Bean

Most department stores, such as Nordstrom and Macy's carry clothes from every style category.

Of course, if you want painless, time-efficient shopping, an image consultant can help you find the right wardrobe items and leave you plenty of time for the rest of your life.