

# What's Your Dress Size?

## The Devolution of Standardized Sizing

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### ABSTRACT

America lacks a standardized system of clothing sizes, most are based on arbitrary numbers, and it is specifically the sizing of dresses that can be erratic. We have focused our research on the varying sizing systems found throughout the world and throughout time. We have looked at the sizing systems in America, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavia. In our analysis of sizing systems found in the past, we have looked at the effects of war, revolution, politics, social change, and economic booms and busts. For our examination of the present, we have focused on the effects of culture and biology on sizing. We have also investigated the effects of standardization on the consumer, the manufacturer, and industry. We have tried to determine the effects of a completely standardized system, and whether or not it is even possible to standardize.

### PAST

1799- Standardization of measurements in France, introduction of the metric system.

1815- Earliest size table introduced, *The Proportionate and Universal Table*, published by Benjamin Read.

1860- Paper pattern industry expands as demands of customized clothing for women increases.

1900s- Ready-to-wear garments gained popularity in the United Kingdom, supplied by American manufacturers.

1940s- The scarcity of materials needed for clothing stunted fashion. In Britain "Utility dresses" were paid for with ration coupons. "Make do and Mend" campaigns meant to motivate women to keep clothes as long as possible.

1950s- In wealthier nation, consumerism increased greatly; ready-to-wear clothes became more than necessity, leading to a philosophy of "more is more." Luxurious, more delicate fabrics became more common.

1980s- Globalization leads to widespread trends; branding comes to dominate world fashion. The period sees the enormous growth of suburban malls in the USA.

### PRESENT

**Standard sizing:** method of classifying body shapes and providing size increments for the production of apparel.

**Goals:** to ensure consistency and clarity for consumers, to make it easier for consumers to find well-fitted clothing.

Standardized sizing allows consumers to shop in many places without the fear of having trouble finding the right size

Size (US)	Numeric Size (US)	UK	Germany	France	Italy	Japan
XXS	00	2	26	30	34	1
XS	0	4	28	32	36	3
XS	2	6	30	34	38	5
S	4	8	32	36	40	7
S	6	10	34	38	42	9
M	8	12	36	40	44	11
M	10	14	38	42	46	13
L	12	16	40	44	48	15
L	14	18	42	46	50	17
XL	16	20	44	48	52	19
XL	18	22	46	50	54	21
XXL	20	24	48	52	56	23

### PRESENT (CONT.)

**Vanity sizing:** deceives consumers into thinking they are thinner than they actually are by labeling larger sizes with smaller numbers. Used to "massage women's ego and promote sales."

**Style:** elastic materials used widely; smaller clothing stretches to fit more people

**Key dimensions:** bust, waists, hip.

Manufacturers often develop standardized patterns and designate sizes according to bust measurements. Including a vertical key dimension gave more accurate sizing compared to just bust, waist, and hip.

Only way consumers attach meaning to a size label is from previous experience. Historically sizes were made according to actual measurements, based on paper patterns. Marketers discovered they could merchandise to women's vanity and changed labels to numbers smaller than actual dimensions.

65% of women say they find great size difference between labels or stores. Less than 1% of survey respondents said they could always wear the same size.

### FUTURE

For an optimal standardized sizing system there would be much that goes into it, taking into account various body shapes, sizes, and body measurements such as those from the waist and chest, and coming up with certain subsets for a size according to body shape. For example, a size 3 dress could have a variety of different subsets to fit a different body shape (i.e. size 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, for three different body shapes where the .1, .2, and .3 represent a body shape. ). Other factors that are effect fit preference are cathexis, the emotional investment a person applies to oneself, self-esteem, and comfort with certain cuts and styles.

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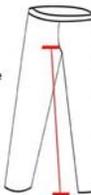
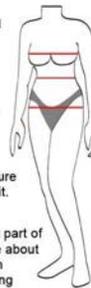
Womans Size Chart				
Sizes	Bust	Waist	Hips	
XS	0	31	23	33
	1	32	24	34
S	3	33-34	25	35-36
	5	34-35	26	36-37
M	7	36-37	27	37-38
	9	37-38	28	38-39
L	11	39-40	29-30	39-40
	13	40-41	31-32	41-42
XL / 1X	14	42-43	33-34	43-44
	16	43-44	35-36	44-45
2X	18	45-46	37-38	45-46
	20	46-47	39-40	46-47
3X	22	48-49	41-42	48-49
	24	49-50	43-44	50-51
4X	26	51-52	45-46	51-52
	28	52-53	47-48	53-54

**BUST -** Measure around chest, under arms and around fullest part of bust.

**WAIST -** Measure at natural waistline, holding tape comfortably loose. For baggy fit, add 2-4" to waist measurement. If you want your pants lower on the hip, measure where your pants will sit.

**HIPS -** Measure around fullest part of your body, placing tape about midway between crotch and belly button, keeping tape comfortably loose.

**INSEAM -** Take a pair of pants that fit you well, lay them flat, and measure from the crotch to the bottom of the leg as shown. If you fall between the sizes, we recommend you get the larger size.



1607 CYNTHIA ROWLEY



Simplicity

