

Dress to look slim

Your closet probably already has clothes that can slenderize.

BY MICHELE MEYER

THE MIRACLE to paring pounds is closer than you think: your closet. "Create a long vertical silhouette by keeping colors and lines unbroken," says Gregg Andrews, a Nordstrom fashion director.

To whittle your weight:

Seek: V necklines. They draw eyes away from fuller faces and make shoulders seem wider and waists slimmer. A wrap dress, chains and scarves with low knots have the same effect. So does a heart-shaped neckline of a bustier under a jacket. **Avoid:** High square and round necklines, which make the chest appear larger. Chokers and tight turtlenecks make necklines look beefy.

Seek: Pants falling straight. Trousers going straight from the hip to the ankle cut a slim figure — unless you're tall, that is. "A boot-cut trouser should be hemmed so it almost touches the ground with a high-heel shoe underneath," says Colleen Sherin of Saks Fifth Avenue. **Avoid:** Cropped and cuffed pants, which shorten your leg. Leggings make ankles narrower but hips wider. Pleats also pad.

Seek: Beyond black. Chocolate, wine, charcoal and navy absorb light, so they slenderize. Keep to a single or close shades. **Avoid:** Lighter

colors that reflect light and expand silhouettes.

Seek: Clothes that skim. Pieces made from matte jersey and other fabrics flow and don't cling. **Avoid:** Excess volume that adds bulk or tight garments that form unsightly bulges.

Seek: Skinny belts. Worn underneath jackets or cardigans, they hint that your waist is tiny. **Avoid:** "Widely contrasting color in belts cut you in half," Simonton says.

Seek: Long jackets. Tunics and jackets extending past the hips obscure them and your fanny. A small shoulder pad and nipped-in waist also trim. **Avoid:** Blocky tops, cropped jackets and linebacker shoulder pads that make you look stout.

Seek: Stripes. Pin-stripes, vertical stripes

Skinny belts worn under jackets or sweaters hint at a tiny waist.



Vertical stripes, dark hues and pencil skirts all make slimming statements.

and subtle patterns can lengthen. **Avoid:** Horizontal stripes and larger motifs that accentuate girth. Busy, bold prints also can make you look larger.

Seek: Pencil skirts. The name is for the shape they can give your body. **Avoid:** Below-the-knee skirts that hit the calf at an unflattering point.

Seek: Sleeves. Long, three-quarter or cap sleeves obscure full upper arms. **Avoid:** Sleeveless, spaghetti-strapped and strapless dresses that form a wide horizontal swath of flesh.

Seek: Jeans with Spandex. Jeans with 5% to 50% Spandex can serve as a waist and thigh girdle. Legs that flare from the hip or knee balance the hips. **Avoid:** Front pocket flaps that fill out hips or small back pockets that enlarge derrières. Wear large back pockets or none.

Seek: Higher heels. High heels extend, and thus trim, your legs. Match your shoe color to the muted shade of your slacks, hose or legs. "Another trick is to wear bare legs with matching shoes, because you don't see where the ankle ends and the foot starts," Sherin says. **Avoid:** Open-toe or spectator shoes that stop the eye midshoe.

Seek: A way to start narrow. Look for pants and skirts that begin at the narrowest area: that's the waist or below the bust, on most women. **Avoid:** Low-rise bottoms that create a muffin top of overflowing flesh. ❖



Long jackets and tunics can hide hips and behind.