

SUMMER SKIRTS

BY VALÉRIE ORSONI

■ "As the days get longer, the skirts get shorter," or so women's magazines would have us believe as summer gets close. Myth or reality? It seems that the "pants at any cost" fad is being reborn with the help of some journalists. It's true that more and more women are wearing pants. To the question, "Why are you wearing pants even though it's nice out and a skirt would be more attractive and more feminine?" women often reply, "I'm too big. Pants help hide those unwanted curves. I'm the leader of a team and pants make me look more professional."

Let's get this straight: pants never made anyone look slimmer, especially when they are worn with the long shirts I like to call "fat camouflage." The alert man's gaze is never fooled, and he's bound to imagine rounder shapes than the ones you're trying to hide. "Large, shapeless pants with long tunics aren't sexy," exclaim all men in unison. They seem to prefer women in skirts who are comfortable in their femininity without giving in to petty hang-ups.

So how does one feel comfortable - i.e., beautiful - in a skirt, with or without the extra pounds?

A few ground rules to follow:

- Leave short skirts to skinny teenagers and anorexic models who can wear high boots with miniskirts without looking chubby.

- Pencil-thin skirts go well on slim women. Wear them to the knee with high heels. Repetto ballerina shoes are cute with a straight skirt on little girls, but not on adults. Stiletto heels are great in the evening, and lengthen your calves which can sometimes seem too rounded. High heels will make your walk look sexier and give a more slender silhouette to your thighs. It's the ideal skirt for those who lead teams and want to project the image of a powerful woman without giving up their femininity.

- A-line skirts. If you have flat hips and stomach, it's your ideal choice. The adjusted waist of this skirt highlights your

major features, and the artistic blurring around the thighs hides wide hips or a few extra pounds. Depending on the fabric, this skirt can be worn with strappy heels or Salome stilettos. Ballerina shoes are to be avoided for the same reason as above.

- Long, floor-length skirts are ideal if you're thin, but to be avoided if you're plump - you might end up looking like a lampshade. Wear them on the hip side with flower power prints and fringed boots. You can even wear ballerina shoes with this one.

- Calf-length skirts go well on all types, whether you're overweight or not. They allow you to avoid the "lampshade" effect, all the while camouflaging the extra pounds you have here and there. Avoid them if they're too tight or too wide: they must be close to the body without touching it. Wear them with heels to lengthen and lighten your silhouette. Heels can really make you "lose" over 10 pounds!

In any case, choose a dark color WITHOUT a pattern to prevent the eye from being attracted to "problem areas," while a bright, light or loud color will highlight your assets.

What to avoid: linings that make creases and render skirts shapeless, thick and textured fabrics which add pounds to a body that could live without them, pockets that widen the hips and the thighs, and skirts with buttons at the top (when

pounds add up, the buttons pull against the fabric).

Finally, wearing a skirt is easier than it seems, and even lets us hide some of our blemishes. When it's warm outside, skirts allow women to feel lighter, more feminine, more in touch with our bodies, and more motivated than ever to reach our ideal weight.

Think of women who are stuck in their men's pants, prisoners in their closed shoes...get out of the tweed!

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