

BUYING CHILDREN'S CLOTHING



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Buying Children's Clothing

The choice of clothing for children is probably one of the most widely neglected responsibilities of parents and other adults. Generally, it becomes so much a part of everyday living that not very serious thought is given to the impression clothing makes on growing boys and girls. It is surprising to note that when groups of parents discuss children's clothing, their conversation tends to be completely adult-centered—discussing the care required, durability, and cost. They seldom mention how the child feels about his clothes. Yet, modern principles in child guidance indicate that we should consider clothing as a child sees it, feels it, and as it affects his actions. The misery which displeasing or ill-fitting clothing may cause the child and the extent to which the clothing he wears affects his behavior is seldom recognized.

According to Mrs. Katherine Read, department head in family life and home administration at Oregon State University, "Suitable clothing offers an important avenue by which the child can begin to achieve the independence which every healthy child craves as he leaves infancy behind. If, in dressing himself, he has a chance to succeed, to gain the sense of being able to handle the demands made by his environment, he is growing in constructive ways. He is becoming a responsible individual. He will be less likely to seek

control in destructive ways or to fight against the dependency which is still a necessary part of his world."

Children grow fast. Clothing can make growing up easier or more difficult. As they advance from one stage to the next—their clothes must allow for this advancement, too. Children's clothes, like those of teenagers and adults, should be selected to be appropriate, becoming, healthful, comfortable, and a pleasure for the child to wear. *They should at no time be chosen merely for the pleasure of an adult who enjoys making the child an object of display.* If adults are aware of how children feel, it is possible for them to select clothes that will build self-confidence, security, and a sense of pride in personal appearance. Choice of clothing and the act of dressing may seem insignificant in themselves, but they are details of early childhood which have a great influence on the development of an independent and self-respecting individual.

The aim of "Buying Children's Clothing" is to assist busy homemakers to provide suitable clothing for preschool children and those in early childhood, through (1) increasing their awareness of the impact of clothing on the physical, emotional, and social development of a child and (2) increasing their knowledge of design, fabric, construction, and sizing of children's clothing as found on today's retail markets.

Physical Development



Children's clothes must be designed for action. Children may be as different in their personalities as they are in sizes and features. But one thing they have in common—they're always "on the go." Active play should not be restricted by clothing. It should leave the child free to run, climb, jump, or squat. Because good posture and coordination of muscles are acquired early in childhood, it is important that the clothes children wear help rather than hinder them in their development.

For the sake of health and good physical development, shoes should always be a new item for each child in the family. Since each individual's walk and posture are characteristically his own, it is important that shoes which support the child's weight be worn by one child only.

Emotional Development

Clothes should give a child a sense of security. Inappropriate dress may make the child awkward and different from other children. The type of clothing worn may affect the action of the wearer at any age level. It is interesting to note that indirect guidance of behavior at nursery school is sometimes carried out by specifying the type of clothing children should wear. It has been found that children who wear sturdy play clothing appear to be much less inhibited in their activities than those wearing frivolous or "special care" clothes. Therefore, in many schools it is recommended that slacks be worn instead of skirts and T-shirts instead of dress shirts.

Children imitate adults not only in behavior patterns but also in attitude formation. If parents are pleased with the appearance of their children, these feelings are reflected in the child and a sense of security is developed. It is most important that children do not become overconscious of their clothing. Overdress makes them snobbish—which eventually results in being ostracized by other children.

Since children grow rapidly, and therefore outgrow their clothing when it shows little sign of wear, it is advisable that hand-me-downs be considered as one method of easing the family budget. Children seem to vary in their attitudes toward wearing a brother's or sister's clothing, or that which has belonged to friends of the family. Some children will gain self-

esteem and will consider wearing the clothing of an older child a boost in status. Others may feel abused and even unloved if they are given castoff clothing.



A great deal depends upon the parents' attitudes toward the use of such clothing. When hand-me-downs are used, they should be adjusted to fit the child, and if possible altered in some way to give them the personal touch of the new owner.

Social Development



Style and fashion are not important to preschool children. Their pride in clothing tends to be more a result of comments they have enjoyed from admiring adults. Children are eager to please adults and will readily act out the roles expected of them.

In addition to developing attitudes toward clothing, it is also important that adults begin to instill in children appropriateness in dress in regard to activity and social expectations. "There are times a 'man' must dress up."

For example: A child should learn at an early age that the clothing he wears to Sunday School is different from that which he wears on the playground.

As children advance in years, similarity in clothing among playmates becomes more important to them. It creates a sense of security brought about by acceptance; therefore serving as a type of social protection.

Design

Major consideration in selecting design in children's clothing should be given to comfort, self-help features, appearance, and growth features. Children's movements should be unhampered and action should be encouraged.

Comfort features

Factors which involve comfort in a child's garment are similar to those in an adult garment. They are the design or cut of garment, the fabric, and the size. In considering a garment, note the following:

- Is the size of the neck opening large enough for a child's head to go through without strain? Avoid collars for the toddler; they are hot in summer and difficult under coats in winter. Instead, use yokes or shaped facings for collar effects.



- Are the armholes, sleeves, and legs roomy enough to provide ease in dressing and comfort in playing? Shorts are more comfortable when they are slightly shorter in front than in back. Girls' dresses should end well above the knees for playtime comfort.

- Is the crotch seam curved in order to give greater comfort than a straight seam? Crotches of panties, shorts, coveralls, slacks, and trousers must be long enough not to bind when the child bends and sits. A curved seam in the seat gives ease. A small pleat in the back at the side seam also means extra bending comfort.



- Does any part of the garment have a close fitting band or elastic insert? Avoid tight bands and elastic in sleeves, waistline, or legs. Any elastic waistband should fit securely without being tight. Elastic $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or more wide and measuring 1 inch less than the waistline is a good gauge for a comfortable and healthful degree of tightness. It is also a good policy to select garments which are elasticized only a portion of the distance around the arm, waistline, or leg area.

- If shoulder straps are used, are they wide and flat enough to be handled easily and be comfortable on shoulders when fastened?

- Are straps and belts secured with loops or stitching to keep them in place during activity?

Self-help features

The task of dressing and undressing becomes a most fascinating experience to a growing child and provides a wonderful opportunity for the development of manipulative skills. Buttons, buttonholes, zippers, and snap fasteners are remarkable items from a child's point of view. Mastering the ability to dress and undress himself and to use a variety of fasteners leads to a happy personality. It not only develops muscle coordination, but contributes to a sense of judgment when he is learning to put his clothing on properly and to fasten

it securely and correctly. Through this process he will achieve the satisfaction of success and an independent feeling of action.

It is also the responsibility of adults to be selective in choosing designs in clothing which have some self-help features and a limited number of fasteners. The following suggestions should be considered:

Style of garments should follow one general style, always keeping the opening in the same place. Center front openings are best. The front and back of the garment should be different so the child can tell which is which. In selection of coats, easy action raglan sleeves ease the struggle of putting them on over a sweater or suit jacket.

Neck openings should be large enough for child's head to go through without strain.

Fasteners should be approximately in the same position and the same type until the child learns to dress himself. Gripper snaps are easy to handle and hold fast, but a long row of grippers can be confusing. Zippers with long tabs or pulls are easier to find and handle than the fine, inconspicuous tabs of dressmaking



zippers. A key ring might be attached to the tab to make it easier for young fingers to grasp. Sturdy zippers (skirt zippers in preference to neck opening zippers) are most practical for a child's use and activity.

Buttons should be round, flat, and large enough to handle easily. Grooved edges are more easily handled than smooth, slick buttons. They should be sewed on with a thread shank for easier manipulation.

Belts and bows are an annoyance for the child just learning to dress. Bows call for the help of grown-ups. If a separate belt is used, fasten it at the sides so that it will always be in place and within the child's reach. If the fabric will not remain tied, it is both a nuisance and a safety hazard.

Plackets should be long enough to permit a child to dress without difficulty.

Appearance

Whether clothes are designed for a child when behaving as a "prince or princess" or for more mischievous moments as "playboy or playgirl," attractive clothes will arouse fun and interest and encourage self dressing. It is best to choose colors which look best on the child. In infancy the child's skin is soft and smooth, and therefore, colors too, need to be soft and delicate. As the child increases in age, skin coloring becomes more pronounced, making brighter colors more attractive on him. The intensity of color used is important from the standpoint of social development, for the garment dare never become more attractive or more important than the youngster wearing it. As a child becomes more active, gay plaids and prints naturally become more suitable.

Trims or decorative designs stimulate pride in appearance, and if used wisely they add the finishing touches to a garment. Trims should follow construction lines or be related to them (neckline, shoulder, yoke, front opening, sleeve edge, or hemline). They must be in scale and proportion to the garment and the child, and should be used only in the amount which enhances the original garment in design or color. If trims do not add to the interest of the garment, it is better to remove them. A white collar on a dark cotton is very complimentary to a child because it immediately establishes the center of interest near his sparkling eyes, glowing hair, and radiant skin.



Design of the garment should also be complimentary to the age and size of the child. Due to the small scale of children's garments, the size of desirable fabric designs should differ from those for mature figures. In mother-daughter styling, for example, prints should appear in two sizes scaled to each figure.

In general, the same principles of optical illusion which govern all structural and decorative lines in clothing for teenagers and adults are also appropriate for children. The stout boy or girl looks better in vertical lines and monochromatic colors. Whereas, tall and slender children are more attractive in horizontal lines with large areas of color contrast.

To the delight of children, most clothing is designed with a pocket or pockets. For what better place could they have to hide a newly found secret treasure?

Since children enjoy pockets so much and use them so often, it is well to place them within easy reach, if the garment is home sewn, and to note their position in garments which are purchased. The size of pockets depends on the size of the garment. Pockets, too, should be proportioned to total size.



Let Ellen keep her rubber ball,
Let Lucy keep her locket;
They are fun to own, of course.
But I'VE got a pocket!
My pocket is my favorite toy,
I never have to share it.
I take it with me everywhere,
Because, you see, I wear it!

—Anon.

Growth features

Money can be saved by buying clothes that will not be outgrown quickly. Though it is wise to buy clothes larger than the child's present size, good judgment must be exercised as to the "degree of largeness" which will be suitable and economical. Just buying a larger size is not always an economy measure. If clothes are much too large, they will not only be strange appearing but will hamper the child's movements. They may be dangerous, as well as faded and worn-looking by the time they fit. A better way of saving the clothing



budget is to look for adjustable straps, deep hems, deep cuffs, and raglan sleeves. Also, horizontal tucks above the hem, (graduated in width) are decorative at first and serve as a lengthening device later. (In some cases wide tucks are made under hems.) Extra length on little boys' shirts and on girls' blouses permits lowering the button to provide necessary trouser and skirt length. Gathers, shirring, pleats, and tucks are a form of width-wise fullness which may be let out as a child grows.

Present-day knit garments are very desirable from the standpoint of growth features. They will not appear too large if the size selected is only one size larger than normal. Their soft texture allows them to be worn for an extended period of time without discomfort.

From the standpoint of comfort and warmth, garments knit of nonabsorbent synthetic fibers must be designed to allow passages of air to float between the garment and the child's body. Design features to look for are open or large necklines and loose sleeves and legs.

Safety features

Colors. A child's clothing should show up against the background in which he is playing. If outer garments are made of attention-attracting colors, such as red and yellow, he will be more easily seen by motorists and busy mothers. His clothing will therefore serve as protection.



Fasteners. Whatever type fastener is used, it should be harmless. Loosely sewn buttons may come off readily and be swallowed; broken buttons may bruise a child's body; and safety pins used to replace buttons are a hazard since they may open if the child falls. Drawstring necklines, though convenient in providing large neckline openings, are not advisable for a child's garment because drawstrings are easy for the child to reach and they become difficult to manipulate when moist.

Trimmings. Since children by nature like to move around to play and "explore" the world in which they live, all trims and decorations need to be fastened firmly so they will not catch onto corners of furniture or sharp edges of toys. Big ruffles and bows, even cuffs on sleeves or pant-type garments are dangerous. Rips and tears should be mended immediately.

Selection of Fabrics

Soft, firmly woven, easily cared for fabric which will not wrinkle or soil easily is recommended for children's clothing. Fabrics should be suited to the child's age and the kind of garment for which they are being used. Comfort (warmth or coolness) is dependent on fiber content, weave, and to some extent on the design of the garment. The younger the child, the softer and more absorbent the fabric must be to prevent skin irritations. As the child becomes older, firmer fabrics may be used without hampering action, but they must continue to be pliable and comfortable.

Fabrics used in children's clothing actually depend on the use of the finished garment and its style.

Boys' clothing may be made of a more firmly woven fabric at a younger age than that used for girls clothing in order to withstand rough and tumble play. For both boys and girls, smooth, firmly woven fabrics are stronger and stay cleaner than soft fuzzy yarns, nubby fabrics, or loosely woven materials. Printed fabrics with a colored background do not show soil or wrinkles as easily as plain colored fabrics or fabrics with white backgrounds and widely spaced patterns. Selecting washable, colorfast, and easy-care fabrics is an economy measure for the homemaker in building children's wardrobes.

The finishes which are now applied to fabrics for adults are also used extensively in children's clothing. Since fabrics tend to take on different characteristics after finishes are applied, it is wise to heed the instruc-

tions recommended by the manufacturer in caring for a garment. Unfortunately, if a mother wishes to enjoy the advantages of fabrics which retain a freshly laundered look after hours of wear, it is also necessary for her to accept one disadvantage: the ability to retain oil stains. However, fabrics with these finishes may be successfully cared for if simple treatments for stain removal are learned and applied.



Fiber characteristics

Man-made fibers such as nylon, Orlon, Dacron, and Acrilan will not absorb moisture readily and will consequently wash and dry quickly. They retain their body throughout wearing.

Cotton washes and irons easily. Finishes help retain crispness and prevent soiling but retain oil-borne stains. Cottons are absorbent, long wearing, and fast drying.

Linen is also absorbent and easy to wash, but it requires more ironing and is more expensive than cotton.

Silk is luxuriously soft; however, it is expensive and not very suitable for children's wear or activity. Care of silk garments requires special handling.

Wool is warm, absorbent, comparatively durable, and if carefully selected gentle to the skin. Unless wool is labeled as washable, it becomes expensive in upkeep.

Blends of fibers are responsible for a high percentage of the "easy care" fabrics. Blending wool with synthetic fibers makes it possible to wash woolen fabric successfully. Blends of cotton and Dacron or other synthetic fibers produce some fabrics which have the comfortable characteristics of cotton coupled with the fresh, crisp appearance of synthetic fibers. Since a child's skin is sensitive, it is imperative that whatever the blend of fibers used for clothing, the finished fabric should be absorbent and gentle to the touch.

Law requires that all clothes be marked for fiber content with the predominant fiber being listed first. Knowledge of fiber is important in selection from the standpoint of allergies and comfort, as well as determining expected care and performance of the garment. Clothes that have no labels at all are usually neither colorfast nor preshrunk.

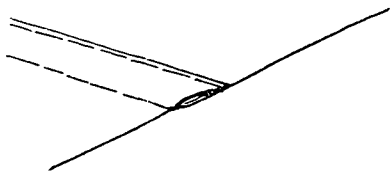
Construction

The continued strains to which children's garments are subjected in playtime activities and the repeated washings which they undergo throughout a season demand that clothing be well constructed. If parents wish to relieve the strain on their clothing budget without sacrificing acceptable standards of appearance, they should learn to judge the quality of clothing construction.

Points to be checked

Garment fabrics should be cut on the grainline.

Seams should be soft and flat to prevent skin irritation. Flat-fell seams should be used for sturdy fabrics such as denim.



A plain seam, pinked or with edges turned under and stitched, is a good finish for broadcloth, ginghams,

and chambrays. French seams should be used for sheer fabrics such as dimity, nylon, and voile. Places that receive particular strain such as elbows, knees, and crotch seams, should be reinforced with extra fabric or additional stitching.

Hems that are machine stitched are serviceable for garments which receive a great deal of wear, such as play clothes. Hand-sewn hems not only look nicer on better garments but are more easily removed and less visible after removal when hem lengths need to be altered. Width of hems in girls' dresses is indicative of quality throughout the garment—a minimum width of 3 inches is considered a "quality hem width."

Shoulder straps will stay up better if they are built up in front and back. It is also helpful to have straps shaped to fit the slope of shoulders.

Buttonholes must be firm and strong. An interfacing reinforcement adds durability to both buttonholes and buttons.

Buttons are more easily handled if they are sewn on with a thread shank.

Sizing

Clothing for children is divided into five classifications—infants and babies, toddlers, children, boys, and girls. Another size frequently found among children's clothing, but not considered a standard classification is the "chubby" size. This sizing is carried by certain manufacturers to offer a better fit for the young child who is of sturdy build.

The following chart gives the standard measurements that go with the five classifications according to size, height, and weight, as set forth by Commercial Standards. These measurements are recognized by most garment manufacturers as an aid in producing

properly proportioned garments.

The important thing to remember is that even after getting a child's correct height and weight and consulting the standard measurement chart, one really cannot be confident that a garment bearing the indicated size will fit. There are several reasons for this problem: Not all manufacturers adhere closely to sizing standards; the child's body proportions may be non-standard; and the style of the garment may be a factor. Many children wear one size in some styles and a different size in other styles. The right size for a child must, therefore, be judged by fit and comfort.

Size		Height	Weight	Size		Height	Weight
		<i>Inches</i>	<i>Pounds</i>			<i>Inches</i>	<i>Pounds</i>
Infants and babies	3 months	24	13	Girls	size 7	50	60
	6 months	26½	18		size 8	52	67
	12 months	29	22		size 9	54	75
	18 months	31½	26		size 10	56	83
	23 months	34	29		size 12	58½	95
	36 months	36½	32		size 14	61	107
Toddlers*	size 1	31	25	Boys	size 7	48	54
	size 2	34	29		size 8	50	59
	size 3	37	34		size 9	52	65
	size 4	40	38		size 10	54	73
Children*	size 2	34	29		size 11	56	80
	size 3**	37	34		size 12	58	87
	size 4	40	38		size 13	59½	93
	size 5	43	44		size 14	61	100
	size 6	46	49		size 15	62½	107
	size 6x	48	54		size 16	64	115
					size 17	65	121
					size 18	66	126
					size 19	67	132
					size 20	68	138

* Note that body measurements for toddlers' sizes 2, 3, and 4 are the same as those for children's sizes 2, 3, and 4.

** Sometimes these garments are marked size 3L to indicate additional length and to distinguish them from toddlers' size 3.

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Summary

Children's clothing can be chosen wisely if these related factors are considered in planning and before a purchase is made:

1. The parents' attitudes toward and expectations of the child.
2. The child's developmental level (physical, emotional, and social).

3. Design features (comfort, self-help, appearance, and growth).
4. Selection of fabric (fiber content, texture, and color).
5. The size and construction of the garment.



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2M—3.5M—2.5M—9-69