

DRESSED,
STYLED, *and*
DOWN *the* AISLE

Becoming a Stylish Bride

CHAPTER 03

A GUIDE TO DRESS SHAPES

brought to you by

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO FIND A DRESS YOU'LL LOVE.

You're very likely thinking about all of the possibilities surrounding your wedding look and feeling a little overwhelmed. Not to worry! In this guide, we are going to walk through different shapes and styles; highlighting the ways they can enhance your figure while also sharing a few tricks on how to hide anything you're not keen on showing).

Note: I am including the ones mentioned in the book in this workbook so that you have everything in one place.

If you're like most of my clients, you will have been thinking about your 'dream dress' for many years. Maybe you know exactly what you want or perhaps you just have a general idea. I am here to tell you that, wherever you are on that scale, **you don't know what you don't know**. While it's great to have a vision when it comes to finding the dress, all bets are off until you try it on. That said, it's important to have a basic understanding of silhouettes and how they enhance and hide certain aspects of your body so that you can enter the salon well-informed and avoid any surprises. Finally, **keep an open mind**. Unless you absolutely hate a specific shape or really don't want to accentuate certain features, taking a few minutes to see how it looks on you can do wonders when searching for your dress.

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Dress shapes only matter when thinking about how they will look on your shape.
- Having a strong understanding of what you like is essential here. Someone may claim a pear-shaped bride shouldn't wear a trumpet, but that's only the case if she doesn't want to embrace her curves.
- You don't have to try different shapes in a bridal salon. You can very easily try on ready-to-wear dresses and get a good sense of what you like and don't.
- The more open-minded you are, the more likely you're going to find your dream dress. I cannot tell you how many brides tried on a shape they swore they would never wear only to find they loved it on and felt gorgeous wearing it.



DIFFERENT BODY TYPES

First, let's consider your body type. I'm not a huge fan of the fruit comparisons, but I've searched and not yet found a better way to illustrate it, so we will use it (grudgingly).



RECTANGLE OR 'STRAIGHT' BODY SHAPE:

- **Less defined waist**
- **Bust and hips are balanced**

Shopping tip:

Adding angles to your shape will give the illusion of curves. Think V and scoop necklines, cinched waists and full skirts.

Celebrities with this body type, include:

Cameron Diaz, Kate Hudson, Sarah Jessica Parker and Nicole Kidman.

PEAR BODY SHAPE:

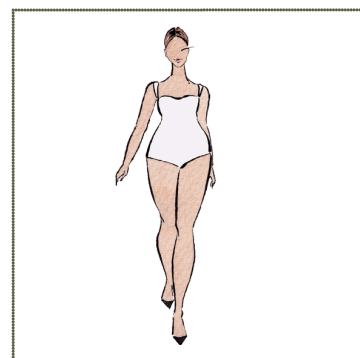
- **Hips are wider than the bust**
- **Narrow shoulders**

Shopping tip:

Fitted dresses with sleeves that cinch the waist are a wonderful way to bring balance to your body and highlight your curves. Straight styles and strapless necklines may make you look bigger on the bottom.

Celebrities with this body type, include:

Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, Beyonce and Kim Kardashian.



HOURLASS BODY SHAPE:



- **Shoulders and hips are balanced**
- **Smaller and more defined waist**

Shopping tip:

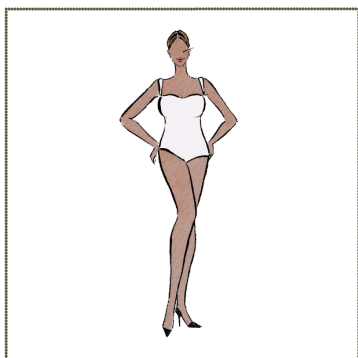
When you've got it, flaunt it! Fitted dresses with strapless and sweetheart necklines will look absolutely beautiful on you whereas ballgowns or dresses with larger sleeves might throw your body out of balance.

Celebrities with this body type, include:

Sofia Vergara, Salma Hayek, Blake Lively and Scarlett Johansson.



INVERTED TRIANGLE BODY SHAPE



- Your shoulders/bust are wider than your waist
- Your waist and hips tend to be significantly more narrow than the top half of your body

Shopping tip:

As with the rectangle body shape, using shapes to create the illusion of curves is a great way to soften the upper half of the body. These body types look beautiful in sheath and column dresses and can get away with thicker straps but should steer clear of halter necklines or those with heavy sleeves which can make the top of the body look wider).

Celebrities with this body type, include:

Angelina Jolie, Naomi Campbell, and Renee Zellweger.

APPLE BODY SHAPE:

- Large Bust
- Narrow hips
- Wider waist
- Smaller legs and arms

Shopping tip:

Focus on dresses with a rushed bodice and lower or embellished necklines.

Celebrities with this body type, include:

Oprah Winfrey, Mindy Kaling, Drew Barrymore.





DRESS SHAPES

A-LINE:



Universally favored as the most flattering of all of the silhouettes, this classic cut is a timeless choice which is why, unsurprisingly, it's the most popular style of dress year after year. A-line dresses are fitted at the waist and transition into a gentle A- A-shape as it moves down the body — many brides think of it as a softer version of a ball gown.

- Lifts bust
- Balances out the body
- Slims waistline
- Hides wider hips
- Grazes over softer bellies
- Great for all body types
- A good option for shorter brides who like the look of a ball gown

BALL GOWN:

The ultimate “fairy tale” silhouette, the ball gown has a large voluminous skirt and is the quintessential wedding dress shape. Because of its grandeur, it works well in a large house of worship or dramatic setting. Brides choose a ball gown for various reasons, but they are particularly flattering if you want to minimize your bottom half and accentuate your waist.

- Minimizes bottom half of body (great for pear-shaped brides)
- Slims the waist
- Great for taller brides who won't get overwhelmed by a lot of volume





COLUMN:

Similar to a sheath dress with a more narrow and structured bottom, a column skirt hangs straight from the waist without a flare at the bottom or train. They are often used in bridal gowns when there is an overskirt attached to it.

- Will make you look taller
- De-emphasizes curves

MERMAID:

A mermaid shape is a slim silhouette that nips in at the knee and flares out below. It's perfect for brides who want to show off their curves (or create the illusion of having some) because this shape really highlights the body.

- This style really highlights the curves of the body — especially the lower half!
- This design can be a bit restrictive, so be sure to move around, sit down and do a few dance moves during your fittings!
- The fullness at the bottom balances the hips beautifully.



PRINCESS:



A princess cut is when a dress does not have a waist seam but instead has two seams going down the front of the gown. This creates a long and lean line and is very flattering on many shapes. Some princess gowns have volume

in the skirt (think Jennifer Lawrence's pink Dior at the Oscars) while others don't have any at all.

- Will reduce the waist
- Will conceal the hips
- Looks flattering on most body types
- This is the design of most "Princess" dresses in Disney movies



SLIP DRESS:

A slip dress is modelled after what used to be worn as an undergarment. It's a column dress made of thin, slinky fabric such as silk charmeuse or crepe and is sleeveless with spaghetti straps. Carolyn Bassett made it famous when she married JFK Jr. in 1996 and was the epitome of simple and chic. These dresses are by no means easy to wear as they can show every bump, but if you have the figure for it, they can be gorgeous. Often my clients will wear one for their Welcome Party or Rehearsal Dinner.

- **While chic and beautiful, there's no hiding in this dress.**
- **Great for tall, slender brides**

SHEATH:

A beautiful and more practical alternative to the slip dress, a sheath silhouette hugs the body, often nipping in at the waist without having a defined waist seam. It's a classically beautiful look.

- **Will make you appear taller**
- **Can make you appear leaner**



TRUMPET:



Brides often confuse or interchange Mermaid and Trumpet shapes because they are both slim through the hip, but a Trumpet shape flares out higher (typically mid-thigh) while a mermaid is at or below the knee.

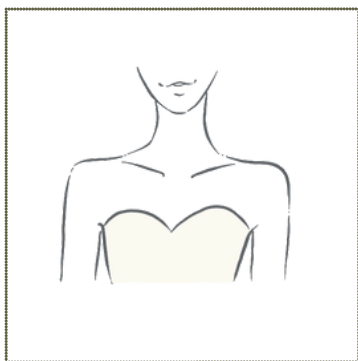
- **Looks great on all body types**
- **Can make you appear leaner**
- **A perfect medium for brides who don't want a full skirt but don't want something too restrictive either.**



NECKLINES

The neckline of a dress serves as the frame for your face and can really change the overall look of the dress. It can also work to change the shape of your body by accentuating curves, elongating the torso and making shoulders look wider or more narrow. Below are the most common necklines found in bridalwear.

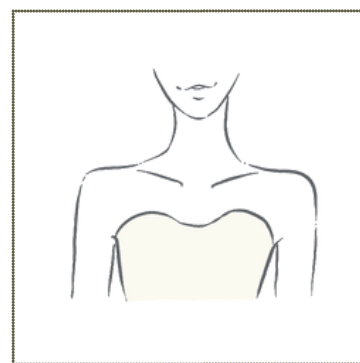
SWEETHEART:



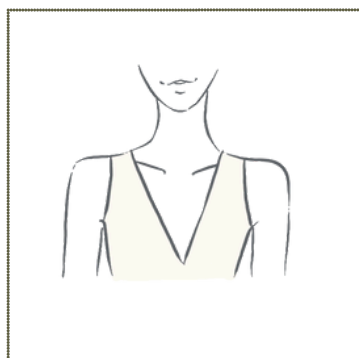
Named for its resemblance to the top of the heart, I have found over the years that women either love or hate this neckline. It tends to elongate the neck, balance the hips and flatter many different bust sizes depending on the cut. women. The depth of the V is an important piece of the equation and can often be raised in production upon request. Lowering it can easily be done in fittings.

MODIFIED- SWEETHEART:

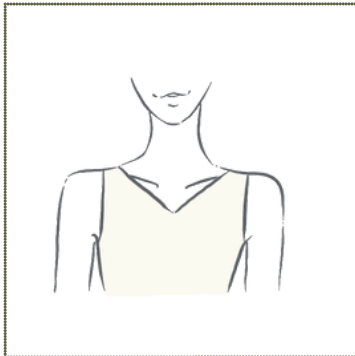
This is when there is a dip in the bodice but is not a full sweetheart. It's a nice alternative for someone with a softer neckline. It's a middle ground between a defined sweetheart and straight across, and can often be done in fittings to a straight neckline.



PLUNGING:



While a bit risque for some, this neckline is a fantastic choice for brides who want to give the illusion of an elongated torso and who have B and C- cup breasts. These dresses usually come with some tulle panelling so you get more coverage and security than you might expect.

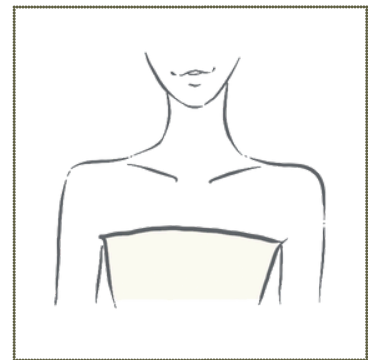


V-NECK:

Versatile A deep V can look sexy, daring, and dramatic whereas a more demure cut can look almost princess-like. This is an excellent choice for brides who don't want strapless and/or want to show off a little cleavage or lengthen their torso.

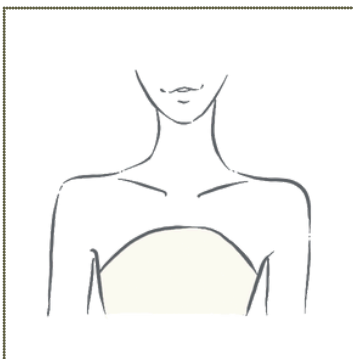
STRAIGHT:

A timeless choice with a sophisticated sex appeal, the straight neckline highlights the clavicle bone and neck and brings broad shoulders into balance beautifully.



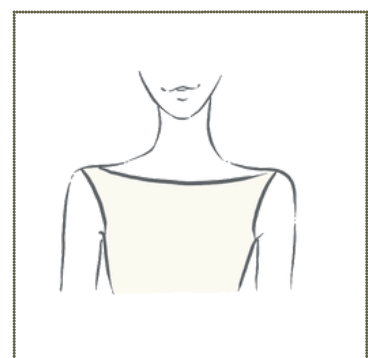
ROUNDED:

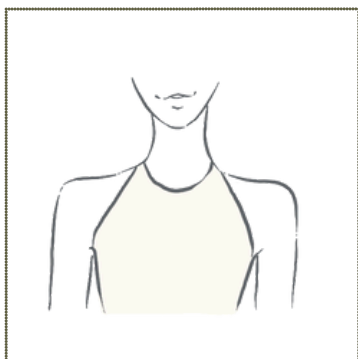
This neckline is when the bodice goes above the bust in a semi-circular curve. It's not very common, and incredibly classic and tends to be good on someone with a smaller bust. And, it's near and dear to my heart since my wedding dress had one.



BATEAU:

Favored by Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly, the bateau (or boatneck) neckline lays higher up on the neck and highlights the shoulders. It's a wonderful option for brides with smaller breasts and has been said to give the illusion of perfect posture.



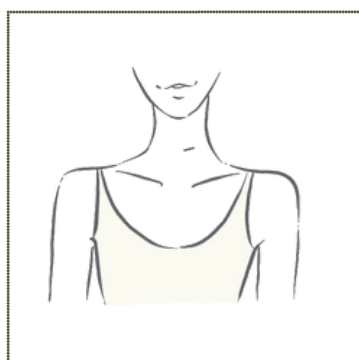
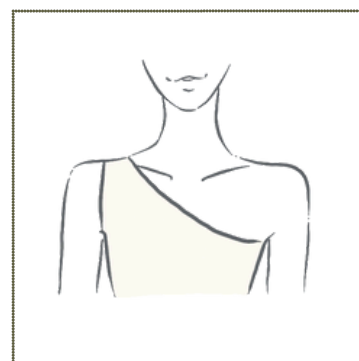


HALTER:

The criss-cross shape of the neckline draws the eyes in and up, and like the bateau, highlights the shoulders. It's also a great way to enhance curves, especially up top and is fantastic for athletic brides who are toned up top.

ASYMMETRICAL:

Dramatic, glamorous, and suitable for all body types, the one-shoulder neckline draws attention to the top half of the body and is best when accompanied by a great pair of earrings.

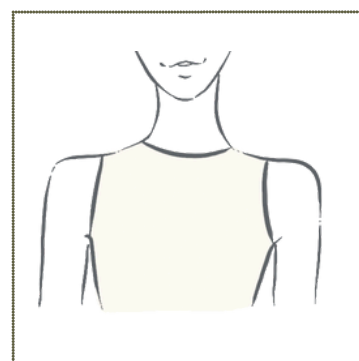


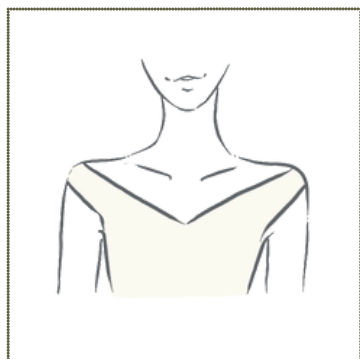
SCOOP:

The deep scoop in this neckline highlights the face and is flattering on women with larger and smaller breasts. Sophia Loren vibes on the former, prima ballerina on the latter, and can read a little more on the casual side.

T-SHIRT OR JEWELLED NECKLINE:

Perfect for more conservative brides who want to widen their shoulders and enhance their bust, this neckline rests high and can be sheer, adorned with lace or embroidery.



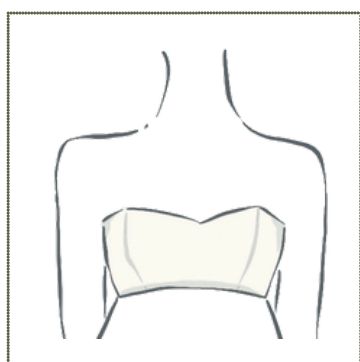
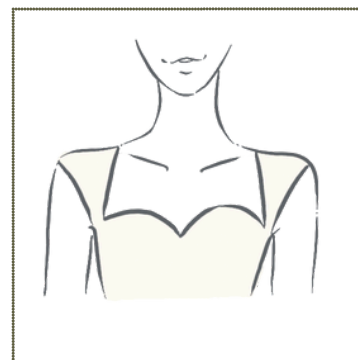


PORTRAIT:

Very popular at the moment, a portrait neckline shows the chest and shoulder while wrapping around the arm (and possibly having a sleeve). It's a timeless style that highlights your face and collarbone and it has the added advantage of hiding the upper arms. I tend to like them most without a large skirt so it's balanced out and does not overwhelm the wearer.

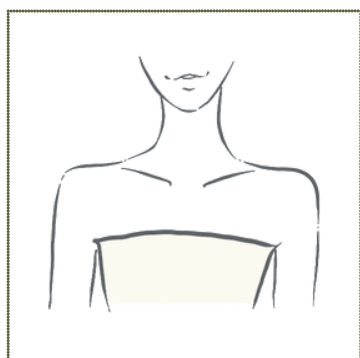
QUEEN ANNE:

Regal, formal and romantic, this is the neckline for brides who want something with a truly vintage and feminine appeal. The neckline is high in the back and usually has a modest semi-sweetheart in the front.



EMPIRE:

The go-to for romantic brides looking to accentuate their breasts and bring attention from their waist and hips. The empire neckline is also commonly used in maternity wear and I've had brides who aren't pregnant express that it looks like they are, so the shape of the skirt is critical.

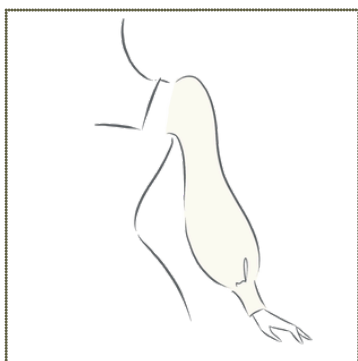


STRAPLESS:

Definitely the most polarizing neckline you will come across, brides typically have a strong opinion about them. The world of wedding dresses is full of them and contrary to popular belief, they are actually flattering on quite a few different shapes. Most women with larger busts are afraid that they will never stay up, so automatically think they can't wear them. That's not the case if the dress is fit properly because the weight of a wedding dress is supported at the waist (which we will get more into later). With all that said, a strapless bodice can be a stunning way to highlight your face so don't automatically discount it. You can also do a lot with it in terms of adding sleeves so it's good to keep an open mind. And if you have a larger bust, it's important to note that the back of the dress can't be too low or there will be nothing to hold you in. If you have a smaller bust, you will have some freedom to determine how low it goes.



SLEEVES

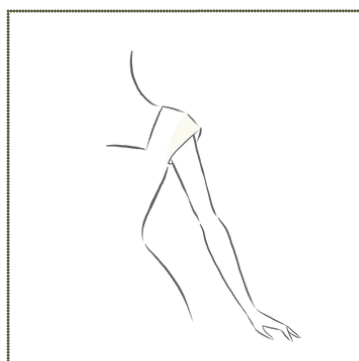
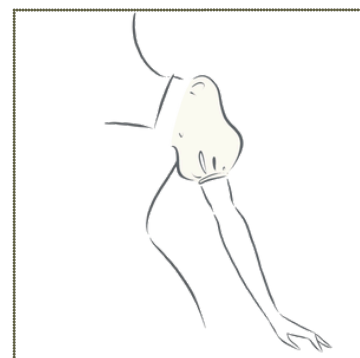


BISHOP:

This sleeve style has been having a major comeback recently. Immensely popular in the 1830s to 1860s, these sleeves are narrow at the top, fuller at the bottom, and gathered right at the cuff. Today you see it done mostly in sheer fabrics such as tulle or chiffon but they can also be done in the same fabric as the dress.

JULIET:

Hands-down the most romantic of the options, the Juliet has a puff at the shoulder and tapers to a slim sleeve. It can be done in a number of sleeve lengths and fabrics, but we don't see them often in bridal right now, however, if you look at dresses from the 80s they dominate!



CAP:

Extending just past the top of the shoulders, a cap sleeve is short enough that it does not need fabric extending on the underside of the arm.

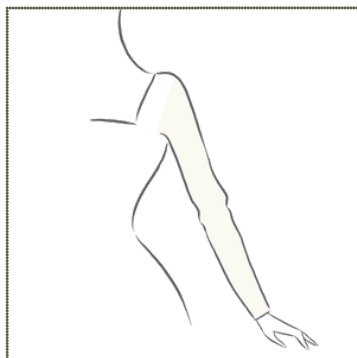
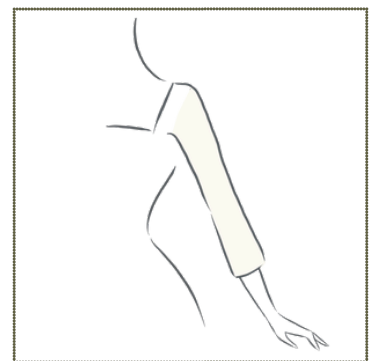


TULIP:

Named for its resemblance to the flower, this romantic short sleeve overlaps on the arm and gives a dress a romantic and whimsical look.

THREE-QUARTER LENGTH:

Universally flattering, slimming, and elegant, three-quarter-length sleeves fall just below the elbow.



LONG-SLEEVED:

These usually cover the arm to (or past) the wrist and can be made fitted or loose, from lace or the same fabric as the dress.

ILLUSION LACE:

This is usually lace over fabric so thin it looks as though the lace lays on top of the skin.



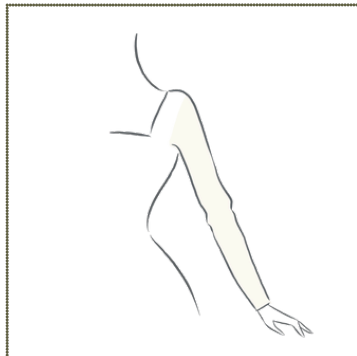


FLUTTER SLEEVES:

Sweet and youthful, flutter sleeves aren't much of a sleeve at all because they are short and made by gathering fabric at the seam to create a ruffle or "flutter" around the arm like a butterfly.

T-SHIRT:

These come in a few different lengths and designs but usually offer slightly more coverage than a cap sleeve.



LONG-SLEEVED:

These usually cover the arm to (or past) the wrist and can be made fitted or loose, from lace or the same fabric as the dress.

SLEEVELESS:

Anything that has a strap or chest coverage that does not have a sleeve. These dresses (think halters and strapless designs) often have more support in the bust area to keep the dress fitted.





WAISTLINES



BASQUE WAIST:

Elongating, feminine and timeless, this “v” waistline is perfect for the bride who wants to look like a princess with an hourglass shape.

DROPPED WAIST:

Incredibly popular in the 20s and 80s, dropped waists are torso lengtheners, but can also make the legs look shorter if they are too severe.



EMPIRE WAIST:

As mentioned above, this shape isn't at the waist at all, it sits right below the bust and often hides a soft (or pregnant) midsection and gives the illusion of height.



NATURAL WAIST:

The natural waist falls at the smallest part of a woman's midsection or "natural waist" and therefore brings the eye right to the smallest part of the body.

ASYMMETRICAL:

Most often found on A-Line and Trumpet gowns, this waistline draws a line from the waist to the hips and is a big fan of curves. So, if you have some to flaunt — or want to create the illusion of some — this is a fantastic option!



RUSHED:

A ruffled waist is made from gathered fabric that is draped across the dress — often asymmetrically — creating a very flattering shape on many body types and is my go-to suggestion for women who tend to hold their weight in their midsection.



WORKBOOK:

My body type is: _____

My perfect dress would look like this: _____

The features I want to highlight are: _____

The features I want to eliminate are: _____

The shapes I think I will love are: _____

The shapes I am not sure about are: _____

NOTES WHILE SHOPPING:



Shape _____

What I loved about (if applicable):

What I didn't love (if applicable):

Shape _____

What I loved about (if applicable):

What I didn't love (if applicable):

Shape _____

What I loved about (if applicable):

What I didn't love (if applicable):
