

Apparel Sizing Glossary

You might be able to look at an outfit and see the right fit. But it's all for naught if you can't communicate important sizing details with your clients and suppliers. Learn the key terminology with this handy glossary.

BY ASHLEY REID

Sizes and Fits



Women's Sizing

In retail, juniors' sizes are odd numbers (3, 5, 7, etc.) while misses' sizing uses even numbers (4, 6, 8 and so on). Normally, an XS is 0-2, small is 4-6, medium is 8-10 and large is 12-14, etc. Certain brands may vary by one or two numbers. Plus sizes are usually marked with W or start with 1X and proceed numerically.

- **Bias cut:** Cut diagonally across the grain of a fabric. Used to create garments that follow the body curves closely (think silk).

- **Contemporary fit:** Contemporary designs are considered to

be some of the trendiest items in the marketplace. The fit is between a junior cut and a missy cut and is designed to be close to the body.

- **Junior fit:** This fit is designed to be close to the body, and the rise tends to be for a younger customer (teens).

- **Missy fit:** Designed for a fuller fit (unlike junior or contemporary). It tends to be less fitted, and is typically for a more mature customer.

- **Tailored and Trim cuts:** The proportions are more appropriate for a flatter stomach or smaller waistline.

- **Vanity Sizing:** The practice of assigning smaller sizes to larger clothes. A woman who normally wears a size 16 might wear a 14 or 12 in vanity-sized clothing.



Men's Sizing

There isn't one standard for sizing men and women. The measurements are taken at different areas and lengths of the body, which result in different standards. These are the cuts for men's clothing.

- **Athletic cut:** Suits a narrow

waistline and allows more movement across the shoulders and back.

- **Oversize/Relaxed fit:** Fits considerably larger than a regular fit, allowing 2"- 4" additional circumference than actual chest/bust measures.

- **Regular fit:** An additional 1"- 2" circumference in the bodice or sleeves to the standard body measurements.

- **Slim fit:** Fits true to size of chest measurements or slightly less.



Sizing Challenges

3. Petite

Knowing the different brands' styles and niche demographics is important for fitting petite customers, says Emoff. "You sample first, but if that doesn't work, it has to be custom-made," he says. Just like with larger customers, a trip to the tailor can be a good idea for petite clients as well.

Charles River Apparel (asi/44620) offers many adult sizes in XXS. "Some of them also have youth companion pieces, and many petite customers typically fit in our youth L or XL," says Vanessa Keefe, director of marketing for the Sharon, MA-based supplier.

rd Test Method (ASTM) sizing standards as a guide," Keefe says. "This helps us determine the most traditional fit for the majority of the population."

Heavy Cost

While taking these steps can help avoid sizing disasters, mistakes are inevitable. Dollar figures are a sore spot, but most companies have a system in place to correct quickly if necessary, including leapfrogging reorders to the front of the production line. Charles River houses over one million items at a time, and a replacement blank garment is typically shipped out the same day. Says Keefe: "We do all we can to turn these orders around as quickly as possible, but there are obviously time restraints."

While blanks are one matter, the price tag can be substantial when decorated products have to be replaced. "The cost of the product, freight, administrative handling and end-user dissatisfaction are further magnified then," says Levine. "Blank apparel can be exchanged, but decorated garments are a full loss, and costs for repeat set-ups to run less-than-minimum quantities are significant."

When customers spread the word about a bad order, there's a non-monetary cost in terms of reputation as well, says Anastos: "If a garment wasn't for a specific person, we can make do. But if a whole group ordered specific sizes, that's a problem."

High-tech solutions do exist. Some computer applications offer opportunities for virtual try-ons and fittings, says Cocco. The

customer submits measurements or body scan data, and the software creates a virtual model of the individual person. Then the garment is dressed onto the model to aid in selection. However, most of the solutions to the problem are low-tech. Valentino recommends a simple tape measure. Size charts online and in catalogs are essential, as well as good communication and knowledge of the manufacturers so questions can be answered, Pamm explains.

"We have online surveys in which we did research on what other suppliers and distributors have used for different demographics," says Emoff. It's all about research and what Anastos calls "feet on the street," which includes sampling and providing specs. "And we suppliers will help out too!" she says.

As both suppliers and distributors have found out (sometimes the hard way), sizing is a subjective, individual experience at its core, despite any highly technological tools that may be available. "Basically, you ask customers to go into the dressing room and just try the garment on," says Gamson. "It's too personal for high-tech solutions. Can a computer tell you exactly how something is going to taste?"

Held adds: "The manufacturing technology is actually making better products, ones that are true to their labeled size and material integrity."

The Right Stuff

So how do distributors get it right, every time? It's all about communication, and knowing

Fitting petite men can be particularly challenging: "You can use youth sizes, so that sometimes makes it easier," Gamson says. "But most companies just don't stock XS men's garments." Pamm has luck with youth XL or unisex XS for both men and women.

But there are some advantages to going for that hard-to-find size. "Sometimes you can leverage the supplier by saying, 'We have this huge order to fill, but you don't make XS in a certain color. Maybe you could?'" Emoff says. "Then they start to stock XS in that color for other customers. You kind of start them off, in a way, with a particular product."

what's being sold. While there's a tendency to become complacent, avoid it at all costs. "Don't let communication break down, and make sure you know the customer's demographic and the manufacturers," says Pamm. "The time and cost of making sure the order is right are better spent than the time and cost of correcting it."

Emoff emphasizes bringing together knowledge of the brands with the end-user. "Make it as scientific as possible so people aren't just throwing stuff on," he recommends.

The plethora of new styles and sizing options that suppliers offer can be confusing and overwhelming for both distributors and end-users. But Keefe says it doesn't have to be that way. "Distributors shouldn't be scared off; instead, they need to take advantage of the choices and realize the value of being able to sell to targeted markets."

Gamson says asking clarifying questions of everyone involved is key. "Know the brands, but if the client is wishy-washy, that's a red flag," he adds. "The one thing you didn't mention will be the one thing that irritates them. But then you mention it to the next person, so you learn from experience."

In light of the floundering economy, says Levine, making sure orders are correct the first time around is essential. "You want to make good sizing decisions so that the garment can be used long-term," she says.

After all, isn't that what apparel is all about? ■

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For more size charts, visit WearablesMag.com

Comparing Size Charts

Before the sample even arrives in your hand, size charts are critical for judging proper fit. But for those who believe that all size charts are the same, we have a bridge in Brooklyn that we want to sell. Size charts vary from company to company and even from line to line within a single supplier's offerings.

To illustrate, we took size charts from three different companies – Broder Bros. (asi/42090) and American Apparel (35297). Note the immediate difference in size. Across all three of its private label lines, Broder's size for a women's shirt run anywhere from two-and-a-half to four inches larger than American Apparel's. And true to the emphasis on smaller and larger sizes, American Apparel's sizes do not extend to 6XL like

Broder's, but it does offer shirts in XXS.

Despite the divergence in sizing, the unisex sizing for American Apparel, Chestnut Hill and Harriton all run very close together – which suggests there is a more universal scale when it comes to unisex sizing.

What does all this mean? One company's small can easily be another company's medium (or large). Professional or do-it-yourself measuring will give you the numbers to ensure the right fit every time, no matter who you are ordering from.

Women's Chest	Chestnut Hill	Devon & Jones	Harriton	American Apparel
XXS	N/A	N/A	N/A	26-28
XS	31.5-33	31.5-33	31.5-33	28-30
S	33.5-35.5	33.5-35.5	33.5-35.5	30-32
M	36-38	36-38	36-38	32-34
L	39-41	39-41	39-41	36-38
XL	43.5-46	42.5-44.5	42.5-44.5	40-42
2XL	48.5-50	46.5-48.5	46.5-48.5	44-46
3XL	51-53	51-53	51-53	N/A
4XL	55.5-57	N/A	55.5-57	N/A
Mens Chest	Chestnut Hill	Devon & Jones	Harriton	American Apparel
XXS	N/A	N/A	N/A	29-31
XS	32-34	N/A	32-34	30-32
S	34-36	34-36	36-38	34-36
M	38-40	38-40	38-40	38-40
L	42-44	42-44	42-44	42-44
XL	46-48	46-48	46-48	46-48
2XL	50-52	50-52	50-52	48-50
3XL	54-56	54-56	54-56	50-52
4XL	58-60	58-60	58-60	N/A
5XL	62-64	62-64	62-64	N/A
6XL	66-68	64-66	66-68	N/A
UNISEX CHEST	Chestnut Hill	Devon & Jones	Harriton	American Apparel
XXS	N/A	N/A	N/A	29-31
XS	33-35	N/A	33.5-35.5	30-32
S	34-36	N/A	36-38	34-36
M	38-40	N/A	38-40	38-40
L	42-44	N/A	42-44	42-44
XL	46-48	N/A	46-48	46-48
2XL	50-52	N/A	50-52	48-50
3XL	54-56	N/A	54-56	50-52
4XL	58-60	N/A	58-60	N/A



Unisex Sizing

Garments in unisex sizing can be worn by both men and women, with the same cut style offered in a broader size scale such as XXS-XXL. Women typically buy into the smaller

size range such as XXS-M, whereas men buy into the larger range such as M-XXL.

Full cut: Provides more width in the hips/torso and a longer stride on pants, whether intended for a man or woman. A full-cut shirt allows more room for a larger torso while keeping the shape straight rather than narrow at the waist.

Modern cut: Indicates the garment tends toward the slender side, yet is not tight.

Raglan: This popular style of apparel is a close-fitting garment with a sleeve extending to the collar instead of ending at the shoulder.

Necklines and Lengths

These terms describe different length styles and cuts in clothing used to create different fits.

A-Line: Style line for apparel in which the skirt fits at the waist (the dress fits at the shoulder) and gradually flares out to a wider neckline, causing it to resemble the letter A.

Asymmetric styling: Design in which each side of an item of apparel is different in structure than the other side. Asymmetry may be seen in areas such as collars, necklines, closings or hemlines.

Basque waist/V-waist: This dropped waistline starts at or just below the natural waistline and dips in the center, creating a "V" shape.

Boat neck/boat neck: A high, wide, straight neckline that runs straight across the front and back, meeting at the shoulders; it is the shallowest depth in the front and back.

Cowl neck: A neckline featuring a piece of material attached to a garment at the neck, which may be used as a hood or draped loosely in front or back.

Crew neck: A round neck with ribbed banding that fits close to the base of the neck.

Drop Tail: Back of a shirt that's longer than the front for the purpose of keeping the shirt tucked in during activity.

Dropped waist/Low waist: A waistline that is sewn below the body's natural waistline.

• **Empire waist:** Location of the waistline just under the bustline. The name of this style comes from the high-waisted styles popular during the reign of the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

• **Intermission length/Hi-Lo:** An intermission-length gown features a hem falling between the knees and ankle; the Hi-Lo variation is a gown of intermission length on the front and floor length or longer in the back.

• **Natural waist:** A seam or waistband that secures or falls at the natural curve of the body, which is the indentation between the hips and the ribcage.

• **Off-the-shoulder neck:** A neckline that lays gently, hovering across the top of the bustline with the shoulders uncovered

• **Pencil skirt:** Also referred to as a column or straight skirt, this skirt follows a straight line with no flare or fullness at the hem or waistline.

• **Princess line:** A style in which the sections of the garment are cut in one segment from shoulder to hem, with no waistline seam.

• **Scoop neck/Round neck:** A low, U-shape or round neckline.

• **Shirred waist:** A decorative gathering of cloth or design at the waistline, made by drawing up the material along two or more parallel lines of stitching.

• **V-neck/V-back:** An open yoke coming to a "V" shape midway down the bodice.

Ashley Reid is an editorial intern for Wearables.

Coming next issue



A New Year Awaits

The ball hasn't dropped yet, but now's the time to prepare for the next year instead of staying stuck in the past. We provide the scoop on all the fashionable items, trends and product categories you're going to want to sell in 2012.

Peer Into The Crystal Ball

But that's not all we have in our look-ahead. Our exclusive *Wearables Sales Forecast* peers into the future to find the hottest markets, the strongest product categories and the key areas of sales growth in the upcoming year.

Testing ... Testing ... 1, 2, 3...

Testing is increasingly becoming an essential part of selling apparel. But how important is it? Where do you start? And what's worth testing for? We delve into the issue to provide all the information you need.

Beat the Cold

Thanksgiving at your door, the holidays around the corner ... it's time to break out the heavy jackets for winter. Our Hot Products Showcase takes a look at the latest in outerwear that will keep your clients warm all season.



And much, much more!

Tailoring

Tailoring includes the making, mending or altering of clothes. These terms refer to different techniques and formats for measuring and constructing apparel.

- **Bar tacking:** a zigzagged pattern of reinforced stitching used at areas of a garment that experience significant wear.
- **Cover seaming:** Parallel rows of stitching made by two needles, often used around the armholes, neckline, wristbands and/or waistbands of garments for added durability at these stress points.
- **Double-needle stitching:** Uses two needles to create parallel stitches; results in visible stitches that are neater in appearance and guard against distress from wear. Often used at a hemline.
- **Hem:** to fold back and sew down the edge of a garment; to form an edge or border on or around a garment.
- **Inseam:** Runs along the inside of the pant leg from the crotch down to the bottom of the hem. It joins the front and back panels together.
- **Outseam:** Runs from the top of a waistband to the bottom of the pant where fabric panels join together along the outside of the leg.
- **Placket:** A slit or opening in a garment that allows room for the garment to be put on. Plackets are most commonly found at the

neck, the wrist, the top of a skirt or the front of trousers. They can be finished with a hem or hidden by overlapping pieces.

- **Pleat:** A fold of fabric that is either stitched down or held in place by another construction feature in order to manipulate fullness. Usually a number of pleats are grouped together. Pleats may be part of a blouse, a skirt or pants.
- **Rise:** The distance from hip to waist. How to measure rise: Sit on a table and cross one leg over the other; measure from the waist down to the table on the upper leg side. This is your rise measurement.
- **Sculpted hem:** A fashionable detail for women's shirts. The hemline is gently rounded for feminine styling.
- **Seat:** Covers the buttocks and measures the circumference of the widest part of the hips.
- **Taped seams:** Strips of fabric sewn into a garment to protect the wearer against the elements, often used to help hold a garment's shape and in waterproofing.
- **Tuck:** A means of manipulating fullness in garments by folding the fabric and sewing a row of stitching parallel to the fold. Fullness is released at the end of the stitching.
- **Waistband:** The band of fabric that fits around the waist of the pants.

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