

Ladies, here are some fashion blunders to avoid

Every woman wants to look her best when she steps out the door. But too often she falls prey to the latest trends or gets locked in a mindset that prevents her from putting her best fashion foot forward.

There are certainly many fashion faux pas to make, but here are some tips to help women avoid the most common.

1. Use trends as suggestions, not as the final word in fashion. Many women get caught up in following every trend. The trouble is, not every trend is practical for the wide array of body types. Take for example the "skinny jean," which has popped up once again in stores. Tall, slender women may look wonder-

ful in skinny jeans, but a curvier woman with an hourglass figure may not. Dress for your body, not for what is hanging on the mannequin.

2. Shop for the size you are, not the size you want to be. A large percentage of women express dissatisfaction with their body image. As a remedy, they may make poor clothing choices to try to hide imperfections, or choose clothing they believe will do more good than harm. A plus-size woman should not dress in baggy clothes to hide her figure. This only adds the appearance of excess weight. Similarly, anyone who wears clothing that is too snug may appear heavier than they really are. Tight clothing tends to accentuate bulges and bumps. And anyone

who is popping out of jeans or tops looks like they have put on weight and still trying to fit into smaller sizes.

3. Fit the largest parts of your body in clothes. Many women have clothing size sticker-shock. Super-thin celebrities and the manufactured images the media concocts may lead women to believe that there is an ideal size they should be. This makes shopping harder for self-conscious people. Pay less attention to size and more attention to fit. Use size simply as a guide and choose the same item in one size below and one size above the one you think you are to find the best fit. You can always tailor items to be an exact fit.

4. Pay attention to the fundamentals. A good image starts with your undergarments. Visible bra and panty lines can turn any ensemble sour. Nearly 8 in 10 women are wearing the wrong size bra. Visit a store that specializes in foundation garments and have a professional size you. This is particularly important for a woman who wears a larger size than the bras offered in most department stores, which may only go up to a DD cup.

5. Try, try, and try some more. Always experiment with clothing cuts and styles when shopping. You just may find a look that you didn't realize would complement you so well.

Cooking together as a family has benefits, give it a try

If you've ever watched one of those commercials where a parent or grandparent is baking with a child (the ones that notoriously pop up around the holidays) you can understand the warm and fuzzy feeling they impart.

Although on screen you're viewing actors getting paid to sell an appearance of closeness, the picture they're projecting is one you can easily recreate in your own home.

Baking or cooking together as a family has a number of benefits — especially for those who don't have many opportunities for gathering together and sharing time.

Consider these advantages to heading into the

kitchen and readying the supplies.

1. Time spent together: How many families today are super busy, as Mom heads in one direction, Dad in another, and the kids balance school work and extracurricular activities?

Preparing a meal or treat together puts everyone in the same space, and offers a no-pressure opportunity to open up about what's been going on in each other's lives.

2. Cost savings: Pre-packaged foods tend to be more expensive because of the convenience they offer. Rather than spend several dollars on a store-prepared cake, save money by easily making one at home with inexpensive ingredients

that are probably already in the pantry.

3. Teach and reinforce simple math skills: Baking, more so than regular meal preparation, requires careful measurement of ingredients. Counting, sorting, measuring, and timing supports lessons younger children may be experiencing in school work -- but in a more enjoyable way.

It's much easier for children to visualize concepts such as addition and subtraction or fractions when they have tangible objects to work with. They can also see how these lessons relate to everyday life.


4. Learn to work together: There's the old

adage that too many cooks in the kitchen can ruin the soup. However, baking together — and assigning individual tasks to all involved — fosters lessons of patience, cooperation and joint effort. These are important things to understand no matter one's age.

5. Reward for hard work: The nice thing about cooking together is that the reward for all of the effort is a delicious treat when the preparation and cook times are done.

Families can come up with ways to enjoy the fruits of their labor, such as game night, or inviting friends and relatives over to enjoy coffee and cake.

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