

## SACK DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** A waistless, loose-shaped dress that comes to the knee or all the way to the ankle.

**WHO MADE IT:** Cristóbal Balenciaga introduced the style in 1956. His version narrowed to a point below the knees.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Molly Ringwald constructed a homemade sack dress for her prom in *Pretty in Pink*.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Don a forgiving sack dress with flat-soled sandals. Or, for a breezy look, take a sack dress from free-flowing to fabulous by belting it at the waist.

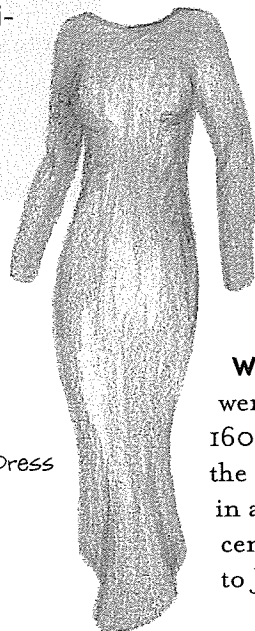
### Shattering the Hourglass

The introduction of the sack dress was pretty controversial. Its shapelessness disregarded the Monroe-esque hourglass figure that was so popular at the time. Some, however, considered

the sack a revolutionary choice and even a feminist act: Women were dressing for comfort and practicality, not merely to please men.



Sack Dress



Sheath Dress

## Early Eco-Minded Dressmaking

During WWII, Congress passed laws that rationed the use of fabrics like nylon, which at the time was only to be used to make military gear (such as parachutes for soldiers). Even pockets in clothing were considered an unnecessary extravagance because of the amount of fabric needed. As a result, seamstresses started to use alternative materials to make dresses.

At that time, animal feed sacks were made from cotton and stamped in bright floral, plaid, and paisley patterns. Designing women would hunt for empty sacks of matching patterns (which could be bought for less than a dollar), then use the material to make "feed sack dresses." This endeavor not only earned style points among the community, but also set a recycling precedent for today's eco-minded dressmakers, like Stella McCartney.

## SHEATH DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This dress got its name because it resembled a knife sheath—a covering placed on the blade to protect it. The floor-length sheath dress has straight side seams and a slim silhouette.

**WHO MADE IT:** Some of the first sheaths were dresses worn by Chinese women in the 1600s (see **cheongsam** on page 13). Here in the US, the long, tight-fitting style has come in and out of fashion throughout the 20th century. Oleg Cassini, personal designer to Jackie Kennedy during her White House

years, created iconic sheath dresses for the first lady in the '60s, inspiring women to go sleek when dressing up for night.

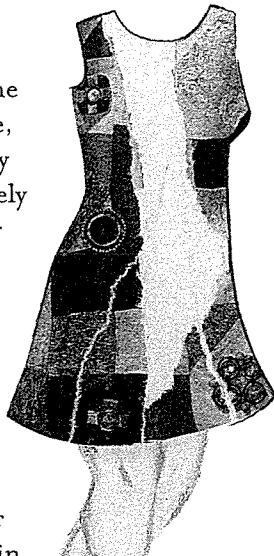
**WHO MADE IT HOT:** This dress was wildly popular with 1930s film stars like Greta Garbo, who often wore sheaths while demurely waving cigarette holders. Carolyn Bisset wore a simple bias cut, 1930s-inspired sheath as a wedding gown when she married JFK. The sexy sheath she wore launched the career of now-famed designer Narciso Rodriguez who dresses stars such as Sarah Jessica Parker.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** The clean lines of the sheath look great with **chandelier earrings** and a pair of **stilettos**.

## SHIFT DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This sleeveless dress with a wide neckline often has darts at the chest, is hemmed at the knee, and can be made to fit tightly like the **sheath** or more loosely in an **A-line** cut. Made using cotton, linen, crepe silks, jersey, or Lycra blends, this style has remained a fashion staple throughout the decades.

**WHO MADE IT:** The shift became a signature shape for designer **Andrés Courrèges** in the 1960s.



Shift Dress

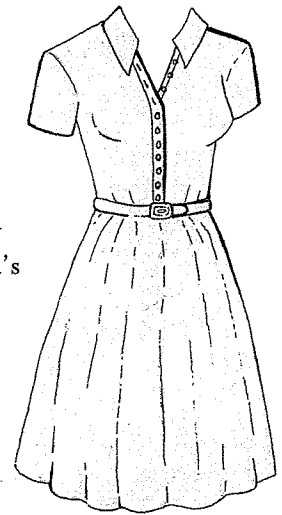
**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Jackie Kennedy wore this style often while campaigning with her husband in the 1960s. Audrey Hepburn's shift in the 1950s classic *Sabrina* was also a true scene-stealer.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Perfectly pair the dress's clean lines and simple elegance with a three-quarter-length coat and heels.

## SHIRTDRESS

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

This knee-length dress is cut from one piece of cloth, has a front-button closure and collar like an **oxford shirt**, and is usually worn belted at the waist. It's generally made of cotton, rayon, linen, and other wash-and-wear fabrics.



Shirtdress

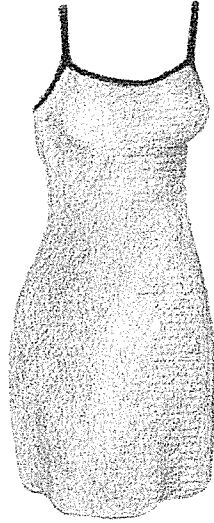
**WHO MADE IT:** The shirtdress stems from a men's button-up shirt. Its design became part of mainstream fashion in the 1890s and surged in popularity in the 1950s.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Lucille Ball rocked the hell out of the shirtdress in *I Love Lucy*, but for a more modern take on this style, check out Gwen Stefani's shirtdress in No Doubt's "Don't Speak" video.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** The shirtdress is most often worn with pushed-up sleeves and heels.

## SLIP DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** Think of the classic slip dress and you think of spaghetti straps, wispy fabrics, bias cuts, and hemlines that hit above the knee, at the floor, or anywhere in between. Featherlight fabrics like chiffon and silk are perfect for keeping this dress slinky and true to its name.



Slip Dress

**WHO MADE IT:** Minimalist Calvin Klein became king of the slip dress when he sent a young Kate Moss down the runway in one in 1993. Though Madonna was one of the first to wear bras on the outside of her clothes, the success of Calvin Klein's image of waiflike models clothed in scant slip dresses helped solidify the "innerwear as outerwear" trend of the 1990s.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Supermodels Amber Valletta, Claudia Schiffer, Kate Moss, and Naomi Campbell all popularized slip dresses on and off the runway in the '90s.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Layer a solid-colored silk slip dress with a see-through patterned one like Calvin did back in the day.

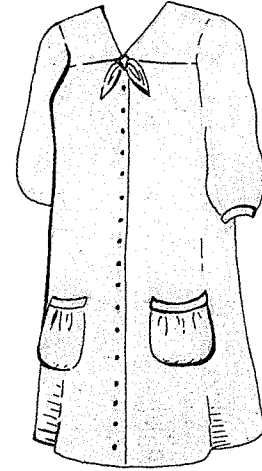
## SMOCK DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** Similar to a painter's smock, this style of dress features smocking (a line of closely pinched fabric) right above the breast line. This tight gathering of fabric high up on the chest encourages the rest of the dress to take on a free-flowing shape.

**WHO MADE IT:** In the 1970s, the prim and proper Laura Ashley label became famous for selling tons of frilly, floral smock dresses.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Designer Mary Quant dressed Twiggy in a smock dress and Mary Janes.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Pair it with opaque tights and flats; if you want to go for an old-school artiste look, add a beret to the mix.



Smock Dress

## Defining Dresses of the Decades

No other garment has reflected the ever-changing ideal body shape for women more than the dress. From the cinch-at-the-waist, hourglass-forming trends of the 1940s and '50s to the waif-friendly slip style of the '90s, the dress continues to dictate which body type is hot at the moment. Which era of dress style best suits your build?

Era	Style	Favored Body Type
1950s	shirt	hourglass
1960s	shift	all
1970s	wrap	curvy
1980s	pouf	slender
1990s	slip	waif

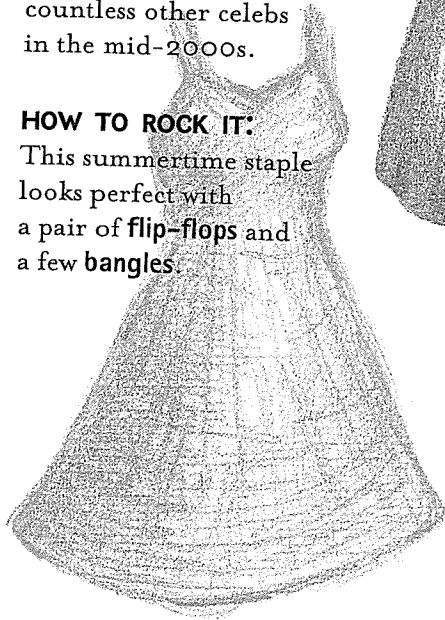
## SUNDRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** The quintessential sundress features spaghetti or tie-string straps, a puckered bodice, and a full skirt.

**WHO MADE IT:** The sundress has been a childhood staple throughout American history, but like the **baby-doll dress**, **Mary Jane**, and Peter Pan collar, its style has been co-opted by adults.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Juicy Couture single-handedly put the free-flowing sundress back on the map with its strapless version, worn by Jessica Simpson, Eva Mendez, Eva Longoria, and countless other celebs in the mid-2000s.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** This summertime staple looks perfect with a pair of **flip-flops** and a few **bangles**.



Sundress

## TANK DRESS

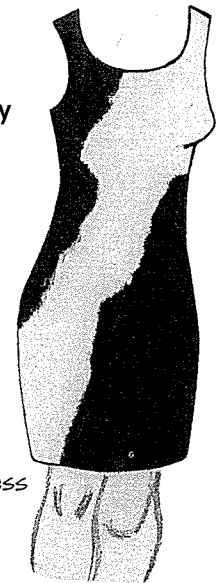
**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This dress is like a basic tank top, except its hemline extends below the waist. It's typically made of body-hugging fabrics like cotton-spandex blends, and it can be short and supersexy or longer and more elegant.

**WHO MADE IT:** Knitwear designer Harriet Selwyn's tank dresses were featured in *The New York Times* in 1977, priming the style for its meteoric rise during the next decade's knitwear craze.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Sure, Julia Roberts played a streetwalker in *Pretty Woman* ... but she was a whip-smart, lovable streetwalker, making her tiny tank dress one of the most memorable in celluloid history.

### HOW TO ROCK IT:

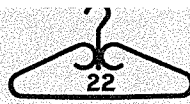
This no-fuss dress can be glammed up with a pair of designer **gladiators** or **strappy sandals**. It also makes the perfect poolside cover-up. It generally doesn't have any zippers or other adornments, and can be wadded up and thrown in a beach bag and *still* come out looking like it's been plucked fresh from the closet.



Tank Dress

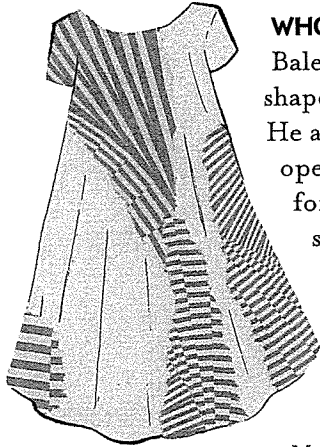
## Skirting a Bearish Market

Do hemlines have anything to do with the stock market? Some researchers say yes. Studies suggest that the higher the hemlines go, the higher the stock prices rise—and as hemlines plummet, so do stocks. Believers of the "hemline indicator" or the "hemline theory" point to the 1920s and '60s as proof. Non-believers contend it's just coincidence.



## TENT DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** The tent is an A-Line (see page 10) that's cut with excessive amounts of fabric. Laid flat on a surface, the dress looks like a tent.



Tent Dress

**WHO MADE IT:** Cristóbal Balenciaga introduced the shape in 1951 with a coat. He and others then developed dresses in the same form, which later became synonymous with 1960s mod style.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** As a regular cast member on *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* in the late '60s, Goldie Hawn was the

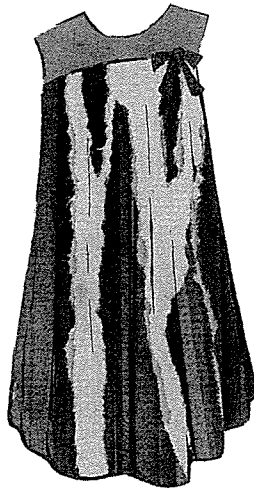
darling of sketch comedy, delivering jokes in short ruffled tent dresses and sex kitten hair.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** The tent is most often paired with flats and tights much like its zanier cousin, the trapeze.

## TRAPEZE DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** The trapeze is an exaggerated take on the sack dress that hangs from the shoulders and flares out at the chest. Oftentimes the trapeze is made with enough fabric to hide small children underneath.

**WHO MADE IT:** Yves Saint Laurent presented the trapeze in his first collection in 1958,



Trapeze Dress

though it would take a few years for the style to infiltrate the mainstream.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Nicole Richie as a girl-about-town in the mid-2000s brought national attention to this style.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** The trapeze looks best with simple flats. But beware: This dress could make even the skinniest of girls look pregnant. Try belting the trapeze to give the silhouette a little shape. And remember to wear tights or skinny jeans in windy weather—this dress will fly up around your face!

Tube Dress



## TUBE DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** The most ubiquitous example of the tube dress is the strapless, form-fitting one worn by Marge Simpson in every episode of *The Simpsons*. The key to the tube dress is its stretchy fabric: Materials like spandex and jersey blends allow the wearer to walk, sit, and breathe without mummylike constriction.

**WHO MADE IT:** Pierre Cardin showed tube dresses in the mid-'70s, but the style's popularity took off with the unforgivably form-fitting fashions of the '80s. (Hello, spandex!)

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Haute couture designer Azzedine Alaïa made paint-on tube dresses for supermodels and the superrich in the '80s, but a pre-Beckham Posh Spice brought tube dresses to the masses a decade later by regularly wearing them with sky-high heels. Beth Ditto, the fearless frontwoman of rock band Gossip, has also been known to wear them when she performs.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Tube dresses are great layering tools. Look to American Apparel for inspiration in piling a cotton tube dress with a longer skirt underneath, leggings, hoodie, or all of the above.

## TUNIC DRESS

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This loose-fitting dress is cut straight from the sides. Traditionally, a tunic's hemline would fall about four inches from the ankles, but many of today's tunic



Tunic Dress

dresses feature above-the-knee hemlines, V-necks, and bold colors. Traditionally made from cotton or silk, like the **caftan**, the tunic is most widely used as a beach cover-up or stylish piece of loungewear.

**WHO MADE IT:** This cut has been worn for centuries by men and women from countries in the Middle East, like Turkey and Pakistan. In the early 1900s, designer Paul Poiret made tunic-shaped dresses to cater to women who wanted to dress sans **corset** and to satiate fashionistas' taste for long slender lines.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** This is designer and socialite Tory Burch's signature piece. Like Diane von Furstenberg, who built her brand from the wrap, Burch did the same with the tunic in the early 2000s.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** The tunic looks best with simple flats or flat-soled sandals.

## WRAP DRESS

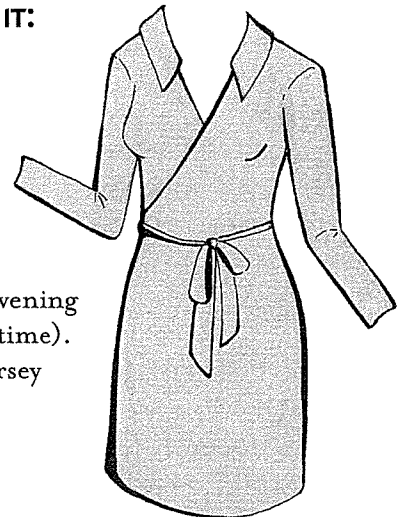
**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** The wrap is a one-piece, knee-length dress made of cotton jersey. It has a body-clinging cut, and its left and right panels cross in front and are tied together by a built-in sash tie.

**WHO MADE IT:** Diane von Furstenberg built her fashion dynasty on the wrap she released in 1974. Her marketing slogan, "Feel Like a Woman, Wear a Dress," and her chic and simple design resonated with throngs of American women. By 1976, she had landed on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine, being called "the most marketable woman since Coco Chanel."

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** The '70s working girl who paired the wrap with a pair of spiked heels inspired legions of followers. Von Furstenberg relaunched the wrap in 1997, and young Hollywood trendsetters, like the Hilton sisters, helped make it hot again.

### HOW TO ROCK IT:

This is the ultimate travel dress, as the style is extremely versatile (and can easily be dressed up for evening or down for daytime). What's more, jersey doesn't wrinkle.



Wrap Dress

# SKIRTS

## KILT

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This plaid Scottish wraparound skirt has a flat front and knife pleats that start at the side and follow around the back. It's generally held together on the side with a pin.



Kilt

**WHO MADE IT:** Kilts were first worn by Scottish Highlanders in the early 18th century. Back then, four to six yards of woolen plaid fabric were used to make the garment. Wearers would gather the fabric around the waist and belt it to create a pleated effect. Kilts are now ready-to-wear with pleats sewn in.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Famous kilt-wearers include designer Jean Paul Gaultier, Guns N' Roses front man Axl Rose, and Madonna on her Drowned World Tour in 2001. But it was Emma Roberts in the 2007 *Nancy Drew* film who clinched the perfectly preppy look a kilt can bring by pairing hers with penny loafers and Peter Pan-collared shirts.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Punk up your kilt like Madonna did by layering it over leather pants, or cut your kilt to naughty proportions and wear it with heels for a slightly sexier look.

## Pleats Defined

**accordion pleats** ● simple single folds in fabric that are narrower at the top and wider at the bottom, made to look like the bellows of an accordion.

**box pleat** ● formed by two folds that meet underneath the fabric, creating a wide pleat on top with inverted pleats between each box. Popular in the 1940s and '50s.

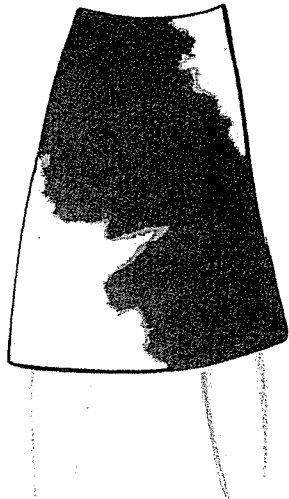
**inverted pleat** ● when two folds of fabric (folded either over or under) meet in the center. This style has been around since the 1920s.

**kick pleat** ● a single pleat placed in the back of a skirt to allow the wearer to walk with a longer stride.

**knife pleats** ● creases just a half to 1-inch apart; all pleats go in the same direction.

## Midi-Evil Madness

When designers introduced longer hemlines with the **midi** in the '70s, stores like Bergdorf Goodman uniformed their salesgirls in the look to push midi skirt sales. But the DIY-spirited American chicks of the free-wheeling '60s—who were known to start trends on the street that influenced designers—did not want designers dictating what they should and should not be wearing. Activist groups, like the **miniskirt**-loving GAMS (Girls Against More Skirt) and FADD (Fight Against Dictating Designers) formed to denounce the midi and the designers who pushed the style.



Midi Skirt

## MIDI SKIRT

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** Any skirt with a hemline that falls at the widest point of the calf.

**WHO MADE IT:** British designer Ossie Clark introduced the conservative midi in 1967 while **miniskirts** were still at the height of fashion. Three years later, midis began grazing the calves of working women.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Faye Dunaway made the simple midi look absolutely ravishing in the 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** A skirt that cuts your lower leg right at the widest point can be less than flattering. To avoid the librarian look, choose a midi in a future-forward fabric—like a metallic one. If you do go for tweed, pair it with a slim, silky **blouse**. No matter what type of midi you wear, always pair it with heels to help call attention to slim ankles.



## MINISKIRT

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** Any skirt more than four inches above the knee is considered a miniskirt.

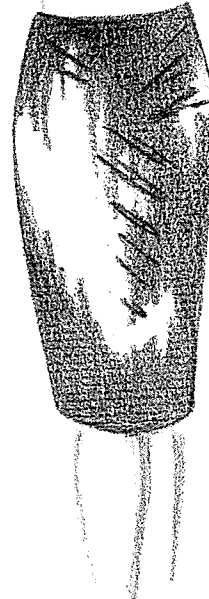
**WHO MADE IT:** Designers Mary Quant and André Courrèges have both been credited with inventing the mini. Quant has said she came up with the idea as a child in 1940s Britain after seeing the short skirts worn by tap dancers of the time. Meanwhile, Courrèges first showed his minis in Paris as part of his 1964 collection — about the same time Quant sold her version out of Bazaar, her shop in Chelsea, London.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** British legends Vanessa Redgrave, Charlotte Rampling, Twiggy, Mari-  
anne Faithfull, and other swinging Chelsea girls of the 1960s all wore minis. By 1969, even shorter versions, called micro-minis, became a favorite among mods.



Miniskirt

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** For a punky look, wear your mini with high-top Converse or **combat boots** like Agyness Deyn. If you're looking to make your mini appear more wholesome, wear it with a long, chunky sweater, opaque **tights**, and **ballerina flats**.



Pencil Skirt

## PENCIL SKIRT

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** This sheathlike skirt is cut in one straight line from the hips to the hem. It's usually made with a single kick pleat in the front or back to make walking easier.

**WHO MADE IT:** Originally known as the sheath skirt, for its narrow (and fabric-saving) cut, this design came into vogue in the 1940s, when fabric yardage was reduced to help support war efforts. A decade later, it was renamed the pencil skirt after the thin writing instrument, helping paint an image for it as the skirt of the smart, sexy woman.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Joan Crawford was the model of female professionalism with her tight pencil skirts, **blouses**, and broad-shouldered jackets in the noir movies of the '40s and '50s. Alfred Hitchcock, film noir's patron saint, also helped push the look when he famously dressed his stars, like Kim Novak and Tipi Hedren, in smart pencil skirts and towering heels.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Take a cue from Angelina Jolie and pair your pencil skirt with pointy-toed high heels (to elongate the legs) and a simple sweater or capped-sleeved **blouse**.

## PLEATED SKIRT

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** A skirt made with pleats, or folds of fabric, sewn into the garment.

**WHO MADE IT:** Pleats have been popular since the 15th century, when royals like Philip the Good of France made pipe-organ pleats (pleats that hang in a series of rolls) popular. In the 19th century, Watteau dress pleats (named after painter Jean-Antoine Watteau, who painted women wearing the style) became popular; they ran from the back of the shoulder to the hem of the dress. But the first pleated skirts were **kilts**, which are pleated everywhere but the front panel.

**WHO MADE IT HOT:** Alicia Silverstone and Stacey Dash in the 1995 film *Clueless* and Selma Blair and Sarah Michelle Gellar in 1999's *Cruel Intentions* all looked perfect in pleats.

**HOW TO ROCK IT:** Skirts with pleats that start at the waist can make the midsection look wider. Instead, try a style with pleats that start right above the hip. Though pleated skirts almost always conjure up schoolgirl images, put yours with **stiletto boots** and a clingy top for a more sophisticated look.



Pleated Skirt