

style wardrobe 101

#40 Bodysuit

By Diana Bulian

Fashion pedigree

Eighties fashion powerhouses Azzedine Alaïa and Donna Karan first championed bodysuits as an essential part of that decade's body-conscious movement. From these leotard-like pieces, the bodysuit has reinvented itself into a stylish, figure-transforming fashion plate.

Why you need it now

This season, sharp tailoring and bod-con pieces have prompted the return of the bodysuit. Whether structured, stretchy or sloppy, this figure-flattering piece promises smooth waistlines with no gaping or mushrooming. Thankfully, the current crop of designers embracing this trend has been considerate enough to eschew the difficult crotch straps – who could forget the dreaded bathroom contortion act that saw us abandon the bodysuit the first time around?

What to look for

Given the impressive roll-call of designers creating bodysuits right now – Ellery, Zimmermann and Dion Lee – it's no surprise shapes are chic, strong, modern and practical. Avoid literal nods to the '80s, opting instead for fashion-forward features. Ruching, draping, folds and gathers sit perfectly in place, crossovers are anchored by the bottom half and cut-outs won't slip to reveal more than intended. The new shapes hint at modest underwear as outerwear and the nude shades are reminiscent of '50s shapewear. Do not be tempted by bodysuits that fall too short (they will not stretch) or cut too high on the thigh – a visible leg over pants is the ultimate sartorial faux pas.

Style to suit you

Petite shapes should have fun with bodysuits in tiny floral prints, sexy stripes or crocheted textures. When working with patterns, keep the shape simple and pair with some sharp tailored shorts for summer.

Pear shapes dazzle in a splash of beading, fanciful fringing or textured fabrics with a high-shine finish. Halternecks teamed with flirty skirts and small heels are a classic look with a modern feel.

Busty shapes look sleek in button-front shirts atop full bottoms that mould to the waist. Perfect with high-waisted skirts or pants as they won't balloon over the top.

Fuller figures, look to sculptural bodysuits that sit flat under sharp tailoring. Strong shoulders add shape to a belted waist, which works with everything from a straight skirt to lounging around in your wide-legged linens.

Slim figures can carry off architectural crossovers or draping, as well as layered sheers. Wear with your new pleated pants and boyfriend blazer and ooze elegance.



PERSONAL STYLIST

Main shot Zimmermann Nightshade bodysuit, \$295, Bittersweet skirt, \$350, shoes, \$495 and ManiaMania cuffs at Zimmermann, \$380, 1800 738 895.
Shorts Eduardo Calucag camel sateen tailored shorts, \$225, (03) 9370 1880.
Cuff Samantha Wills Xanadu bracelet, \$159, samanthawills.com.au.
Bag Manzoni light-tan bag, \$379, 8569 5555.
Shoes Mogil flats, \$189, (03) 9827 6005.



Where to shop

Sass & bide loves a bodysuit and it shows. The label's meld fringing and draping is evocative of an urban trend warrior. Ellery streamlines mesh with sharp shoulders and Dion Lee's nude high-neck jersey bodysuit is bound to become an indispensable basic. Sportsgirl does a great black-and-white halterneck. Metalicus offers colourful striped versions that are young and fun and Wrangler's playful pieces cleverly double up as a swimsuit.

Therese Rawsthorne is also definitely worth a look and Zimmermann's Nightshade bodysuit is a knockout.

For previous Wardrobe 101 entries, see smh.com.au/lifeandstyle.

Five more ways to wear

Feminine B with #24 patterned skirt, neutral heels and a strong cuff.

Cute B under a cropped top with #31 shorts and short boots.

Chic B with #35 pleated pants, exotic heels and a #2 blazer.

Smart B with #4 pencil skirt, #16 cropped jacket and pumps.

Casual B with #10 jeans, #38 summer jacket and leather loafers.