

Do you have the right datewear?

Do you have the right datewear — clothes to wear on dates? I think it's especially important to have the right kind of attire for the first meeting. You know how important first impressions are — and how you dress says a lot about you.

Guys have shown up in wrinkled shirts and dirty jeans. Yuck! I don't expect him to wear an Armani suit on the first meeting — just on the second date. Just kidding. I do expect him to make some effort to look nice, just as I do. In fact, unless we are going to garage sales, the beach or hiking, I expect him to show that he cares about how he looks.

So what to wear? If you haven't dated in a while you may have to buy some datewear. This is tops, slacks or skirts that are somewhat casual, but are flattering and current. Your old jeans and t-shirt just won't do, unless you want to attract a man who wears old jeans and t-shirts too, or you have a killer body and look great in jeans and t-shirts. Most of us don't.



You don't want tops that are too tight or too revealing. I call cleavage-plunging tops "slutwear." You might show just a hint of cleavage, but don't go all Pamela Anderson unless you're a starlet. Your date will think you are loose, even though cleavage is now considered an accessory.

You may need to get new jewelry, belts and shoes if all you have is workwear and sweat clothes. If you have trouble pulling it all together, ask a stylish friend to help you, or make an appointment with a Macy's personal shopper. You really only need one or two outfits. You will be meeting a lot of guys for first dates, fewer for second, and even fewer for third dates.

Think about how you want to be perceived — approachable, confident, vulnerable, sexy. You only get one chance to cement that first image in his mind, so it's important to be strategic. I often wear a casual skirt on the first meeting, as I think it's more flattering on me than slacks. What do you look best in? Make sure it's clean, ironed and ready to knock him off his feet!

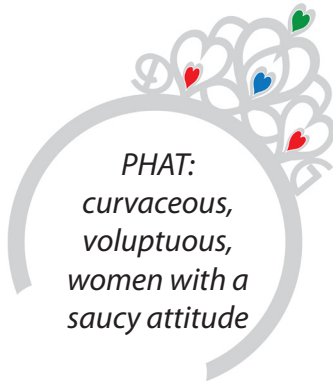
Do you feel PHAT on a date?

No, I'm not asking if you are fat, although many midlife women are concerned about extra pounds that have accumulated through childbirth, enjoying life, heredity, and slowing metabolism. I find it interesting that most of the overweight men I've gone out with don't consider themselves overweight, but near-normal-weight women often consider themselves fat.

I'm talking about PHAT: Pretty, Hot And Thick. This term has become popular with the under-30 crowd to describe

curvaceous, voluptuous, Rubensesque, plump, plus-size women with a saucy attitude.

In dating, it can be sobering reading many men's profiles that say they only want a woman who is slender



when you know you aren't. I am thrilled when I read that a man accepts — and sometimes prefers — a woman with some curves. What this says to me is that the man is a bit more open minded than many and understands there are amazing women in packages that are beyond size 2.

A movie titled “PHAT Girlz” starring Mo’Nique, focused on showing that women who wear queen-size hose can feel sexy and be attractive to hot men. Queen Latifah has never shied away from strutting her stuff in tight-fitting, revealing clothing. No longer is being larger a reason to feel one must hide behind matronly clothing.

Being PHAT is mostly about attitude. It is not being afraid to wear flattering, curve-accentuating clothing. It is about feeling sexy and allowing that attitude to come out. You exude self-esteem and like who you are. It shows through your walk, your posture, your solid eye contact, your easy smile, your flirting.

If you want some ideas on how to look fabulous if you are PHAT, rent Queen Latifah’s “Last Holiday” (after her transition), “Bringing Down the House” and “Beauty Shop.” Also, the aforementioned “PHAT Girlz.”

If you have a larger figure, what do you do to feel PHAT? What do you do to show you feel hot on a date? What movies, actresses or recording artists do you look to for inspiration?



What is your attire telling your dates?

Is what you wear on the first few dates with a guy sending the messages you want? Do you find men relate to you differently than you'd like? It may not be them — it may be signals you're sending through your appearance.

When I began dating again I thought I had to wear what I saw on twenty-something gals: clothes that didn't leave a lot to the imagination — tight and revealing. Confiding my trepidation to a friend, she wisely said, "If you show cleavage down to your navel you'll only attract men who only want your body, not men who are interested in your mind or personality."

I took her advice and wore less-revealing, yet flattering and up-to-date clothes on first dates. I saved the plunging cleavage for dress-up events when I knew that my body wasn't the only thing a guy was after.

If you don't regularly wear sexy clothes other than on dates, you can forget the effect it can have on men you aren't romantically interested in. I was reminded, some-

what embarrassingly, at a dinner party the other night. I wore a top that was lower cut than I usually wear to a casual social event. I didn't think about it much until at dinner a male friend seated near me complimented my blouse. I offhandedly confided that it was a bit more revealing than I usually wore. The man seated next to him, who I didn't know, chimed in, "Why do you think we're all sitting at this end of the table?" I was suddenly aware that I'd been conversing with 5 unaccompanied married men seated around me.

Silly me. I wouldn't wear that blouse on a first date, as I wouldn't want to give a man the impression I'm inviting

more than getting to know him. I wasn't trolling for men's attention, and since I knew this party would be attended by partnered — not single — men, I didn't feel my attire would attract unintended focus. Dumb, I know.

Although some men claim not to notice what a woman is wearing, I'm sure they notice the effect her attire has on him. He may not be able to remember specifically the cut of your blouse, the style of your skirt, or how your earrings matched your necklace. But he does notice at some level if what you're wearing is flattering on you.



Recently, I chatted with a married friend about women's shoes and he said, "The truth is, men don't notice the shoes women wear." I knew he was a fan of Eva Longoria's *Desperate Housewives* character Gabrielle. I asked, "If Gabby wore baggy sweat pants with sneakers, flip flops or hiking boots would she still be as sexy to you?" He agreed that while Gabby could be sexy in a potato sack, her footwear did make her even more so. Her attire made a difference in her attractiveness to him.

In "Do you have the right datewear?" (page 1) I suggest you think through what impression you want to make on a first encounter. I think of dating clothes — dateware — like a costume. Just as actors have specific costumes to immediately broadcast many attributes like age, economic status, time period and personality, so does your dating costume. What you wear shouldn't project someone you're not, but should telegraph the characteristics you want your date to know about you: warm, friendly, stylish, smart, fun, or whatever you want to say.





*What do others see
through your glasses?*

In Dorothy Parker's 1936 poem "News Item," she wrote of feeling that men were not likely to be drawn to — make a pass at — women who wore glasses. I don't know if that is still true, 70 years later. Some men, like a former beau, said he thought women in glasses were sexy. I think people can be appealing with specs, depending on the glasses.

However, with the explosion of LASIK and Americans' decades long love affair with contacts, I think fewer people wear glasses now. But I've noticed many of the men in online profiles are still bespectacled. Perhaps this is a function of midlife where more people need glasses.

What strikes me most, however, is how outdated those specs are. Many — in fact, I'd say nearly all — are the size and shape of what we wore in the '80s, some going back to the '70s. This means they haven't been updated in 20 or more years, maybe since the guy was in high school or college.

When I observe this, I can't help wonder what else hasn't been updated. Is he still wearing clothing from 10, 20 or 30 years ago? Is his haircut also from the Reagan era?

But, you may ask, what does it matter?

We all want to believe we will love and be loved for what's inside, not on the outside. But the outside often

reflects what's on the inside. Does wearing outdated clothing signify outdated attitudes?

Not necessarily. Does

wearing hip attire show a more progressive perspective? Not always.

Yet, many times there is

a parallel. Even if your

profession requires you

to wear clothing that is

the opposite of your point of view, you will often find

ways to express your personality. If you are a liberal

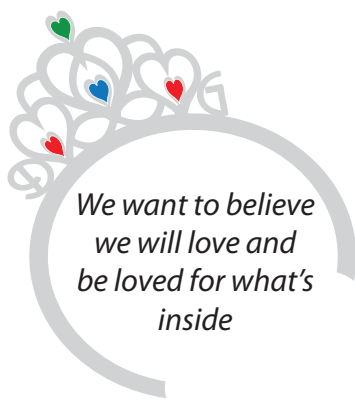
attorney who must wear conservative suits, you may

express your perspective in avant-garde, yet tasteful,

accessories. Or maybe you just consider your conservative

attire as a costume for work, and let your quirky

side show in your off-work duds.



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Glasses are one way to accessorize and express your personality. A male friend daily chose from his

collection of 35 pairs of glasses before he got LASIK.

He picked the pair that best reflected how he wanted