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Keys to Buymanship: Children's Clothes

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—keys to buyMANSHIP—
**CHILDREN'S
CLOTHES**

Cooperative Extension Service

South Dakota State University

United States Department of Agriculture

CHILDREN'S CLOTHES

By ELIZABETH K. EASTON, extension clothing specialist

Clothing is extremely important to the child or pre-adolescent. But, it is not enough to say that neat, comfortable, attractive, appropriate, and becoming clothing contributes to a child's well-being and self confidence. Suitable clothing provides a means by which children can begin to achieve the independence which every child craves. As children move from one stage of development to the next, their clothes must allow for physical growth and for how they feel about their clothing. As a parent one is concerned with care, durability, and cost. Children's clothing can not be chosen merely for the pleasure of an adult who enjoys making the child an object of display.

The infant's world is limited to those things which directly affect his senses, therefore the texture of his garments and whether or not they keep his body at a comfortable temperature are the most important clothing considerations.

Toddlers dislike the confinement of clothes and being dressed and undressed. Clothing that does not restrict movement is the most important factor in clothing for the child who is learning to sit, stand, crawl, climb and run. Clothing for the toddler should have as many self-help features as possible.

The pre-school child likes to be the center of attention and knows that adults notice him, therefore he likes new clothes. He prefers bright primary colors, especially red. He likes soft textures and small decorations. He also enjoys clothes that help him identify with one or the other of his parents or his hero of the moment. The pre-schooler also needs comfortable clothing which will allow for his very active life. In new situations he may prefer old, familiar clothes to help him feel secure. At this age the child is not interested in becomingness, appropriateness, durability, price, variety, conformity or cleanliness.

Comfort is easiest to achieve in fabrics with soft weaves and finishes. Knits are ideal for they are absorbent and provide air spaces which act as non-conductors of heat. Garments that have large

openings for ease in getting on and off and those that do not restrict movement are important to both parent and child at this age. Loose fitting garments with raglan sleeves are ideal.

A child who is happy about his clothes is likely to feel accepted and even admired by his peers. From this approval a child derives a sense of security. As children grow, clothes need to change to meet these needs. While comfort remains first in importance, personal taste and increased activity require different designs.

DESIGN

Properly designed clothing has a decided effect on health and habit formation of the young child. Children need clothes for play, school and dress-up. Design can serve more than one of these functions. Choose simple, uncluttered lines that allow the child to take an active part in his surroundings. Some designs camouflage growth features. Shoulder fullness can be furnished by small tucks, gathers, shirring, flares or pleats. High-yoked, pleated, or smocked dresses without belts are very suitable for little girls. Other design factors which make garments adaptable to children's changing needs are:

1. Dresses without definite shoulder or waistline
2. Wide seams which can be released
3. Deep hems that may be let down
4. Pinafore, trousers or jumper with adjustable straps, elastic waistband
5. Skirts and trousers made to button on blouses or shirts of generous length
6. Dresses made with horizontal tucks above the waistline, or at the shoulder or in the skirt
7. Contrasting ruffles, yokes and bands on skirts or slips

The design should also contribute to safety. Knit cuffs on sleeves and legs and shoulder straps that stay in place contribute to comfort as well as safety. Buttons and fasteners should be durable to



wear, insensitive to heat, and securely attached. Pockets encourage neatness and contribute to a feeling of self-importance for the young child. Patch pockets are less likely to catch on things and tear if set at a slant. Keep trimmings simple and colorful to add a touch of individuality. A contrast in fabric, texture, weave, design or color may be sufficient trim. Choose trim appropriate in weight and quality to the age, sex and personality of the wearer.

Closures that a young child can manipulate may be incorporated into a well designed garment.

FABRIC

When shopping for children's clothing consider:

- ▶ serviceability,
- ▶ ease of care
- ▶ fiber content
- ▶ shrinkage expected
- ▶ colorfastness

Firm, smooth, evenly woven fabrics do not soil readily and can take much wear and washing. Special finishes may increase length of life and ease of upkeep. Fabric texture is important. No child likes rough, harsh textures. Fur and velvet have a strong appeal for children.

CONSTRUCTION AND DURABILITY

For maximum wear look for these features:

1. Seams soft and flat to prevent irritation, and well finished to resist pulling out and raveling.

2. Points of greatest strain (such as under buttonholes, ends of pockets and closures, crotch, sleeve) reinforced. Plackets should be reinforced with tape or double-stitched at the ends.
3. Fasteners and trimmings firmly attached and washable.
4. Hems and trouser cuffs deep enough for lengthening.
5. Edges that receive hardest pulls should be reinforced with facings, bindings or several rows of stitching.

A child's clothes receive rougher wear, suffer more hazards, and require more laundering than the clothing of adults. Less expensive ready-to-wear may be improved by restitching seams and making reinforcements at points of strain. Such attention, imaginatively carried out, may serve a decorative function.

SIZE AND FIT

When a child's clothes fit properly he is comfortable and appears attractive. For ease in wear there should be a long crotch seam in panties, play suits and trousers. Ample armholes, loose fitting cuffs or bands, and sufficiently long under arm seams promote freedom of movement. Tee shirts should open at the front neck or have openings generous enough to pull over the head.

Although labels for size are attached to all clothes for children, measurements are the only reliable basis for selecting size. Choose garments made of knitted fabric at least one size larger than other clothes to allow for shrinkage.

Because of child's rapid growth, a wise mother keeps her child's wardrobe small and selects as many multi-purpose garments as possible.

Buy children's clothing by size, not age. Most manufactures follow size standards set forth by the U. S. Department of Commerce. Buying is easier if you have accurate measurements of each child, including *weight, height, chest, waist and hip*.

Test the fit of the garment on the child before making a final choice.

1. Examine neckline for gapping or binding; either may cause skin irritation.
2. Select roomy sleeves; tight ones restrict movement and pull out.
3. Buy shirts and blouses long enough to stay tucked in if that is the way they are intended to be worn.
4. Select outer garments that are large enough to be worn over other clothing and are easy for the child to handle.

5. Whenever possible choose "growth" features, such as let-out-tucks, which can fit the child perfectly now and also later on.
6. Choose garments that allow for growth, such as:
 - ▶ undefined waistlines
 - ▶ deepcut armholes
 - ▶ raglan sleeves
 - ▶ no tight cuffs or bands
 - ▶ stretch or knit fabrics
 - ▶ two-piece garments
 - ▶ adjustable straps

SHOES

Well made, perfectly fitted shoes are essential for healthy feet. Buy only those shoes that have been fitted on a carefully measured foot. Watch carefully for indications of outgrown shoes, for soles curled at the top or worn around the edges. Soles should be renewed only if the shoe is half an inch longer and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch broader than the child's foot. Fit the shoe while the child is bearing weight on his feet. Somewhat larger shoes than necessary are greatly to be preferred to those that are even slightly too small. Replacing shoes is a matter that should not be postponed. Do not hand down outgrown shoes from older to younger children.

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