

Beyond Bra Fit

According to O magazine, 85% of women are wearing the wrong size bra. Most of us tend to misread the size of our bust and settle for the bra fit that we think sounds most feasible for us; rather than getting down to the nitty-gritty task of breast measurement, we tend to rely on a size that was most comfortable for us several years ago (when we were probably much slimmer), forgetting that our breast size fluctuates not only from weight gain but also from hormonal changes during the course of a month. But bra fit is just one aspect of getting the right bra. We must consider need as well. No more is this more evident than in the relationship between form and function in bras. It is necessary for us not only to ensure the right bra fit and cup-size for our breasts; we need as well to know which kind of bra to get for which purpose.

Bras come in many shapes and sizes to service just as many needs and purposes. There is no such thing as a one size fit all bra; neither is there a multi-purpose bra. If you are looking for a specific effect in the shape and outline of your bust, you might consider the following guidelines before purchasing your bra.

To increase bust size: If you want to increase your overall bust size, you need to look at the padded bras. Depending on where you want that increase in your bra fit, you can look for a bra that is padded thinly or thickly all over both cups. If you are looking for a bra that will cover your nipples under a snug t shirt or sheer top, go for a padded bra as well.

To create a cleavage: A push-up front-closure underwire bra with extra detachable pads can give you the defined cleavage you are looking for. Experiment with the pads to create the right bra fit and effect you want. A racer back contoured bra with front closure will also give you extra snugness and support at the shoulders and better definition at the cups. After all, you only want to suggest a cleavage, not provide full disclosure.

To uplift a sagging breast: Look for underwire bras that have half cups, a narrow space between the cups and snug bands so that the bras push in from the sides. They work by enhancing A and B cups without the need of full cup bras.

To get firm support: If you require firm support for a hefty breast, look for a bra that has moulded cups designed in such a way that the fabric holds to its shape so that the bra fit is almost flawless. Choose a sturdy yet flexible fabric which will provide added support and separation.

To minimize a hefty breast: To minimize a well-endowed breast, look for a contour style bra with built-in side panels that will stabilize the breast and give them support. Ideally, the back strap should be about 1-2 inches above waist level; should it be anymore than 2 inches, you will have a bra fit that will add 10 pounds to your silhouette: your bra strap will be riding up the back which will in turn create unnatural and unflattering bulges and ripples.

To provide comfort and support during exercise: Many women in their fifties are embarking on exercise programs. For these courageous souls, a comfortably snug sports bra with a strong side panel and flexible back strap would serve the purpose. But there is more to the form and function of a sports bra and I sense that designers should take a more in-depth look at this new generation of newly mobile women. A sports bra can do more than provide a physically supportive fit to the body. There is an ambience that comes with the sports bra that seems very fitting to the 50 plus mind: no longer enslaved to the childbearing imperative, we are, ironically, having better sex and better lives. Menopause has liberated us from the fears of pregnancy; it has also freed us from the doe-eyed, 18 inch waist, Bambi mystique. We want our own unique look-powerful arms and legs, a face that has seen loss and gains, a heart that has acknowledged love in all its dimensions and a walk that speaks of self. The bra that has the most appeal for us now, re-discovering our bodies in bold, new, renovated form is the Sports Bra. And while there are several brands on the market, not one has yet captured the potential a "mindfully" marketed Sports Bra can have on a growing force of 50 plus women.

Know yourself and know your bras!

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About the Author

A runner for 27 years, retired schoolteacher and writer, Mary is helping people reclaim their bodies through nutrition, exercise, positive vision and creative engagement. You can visit her at <http://www.GreatBodyat50.com> or learn how she lost her weight at <http://www.greatbodyproteinpower.com>