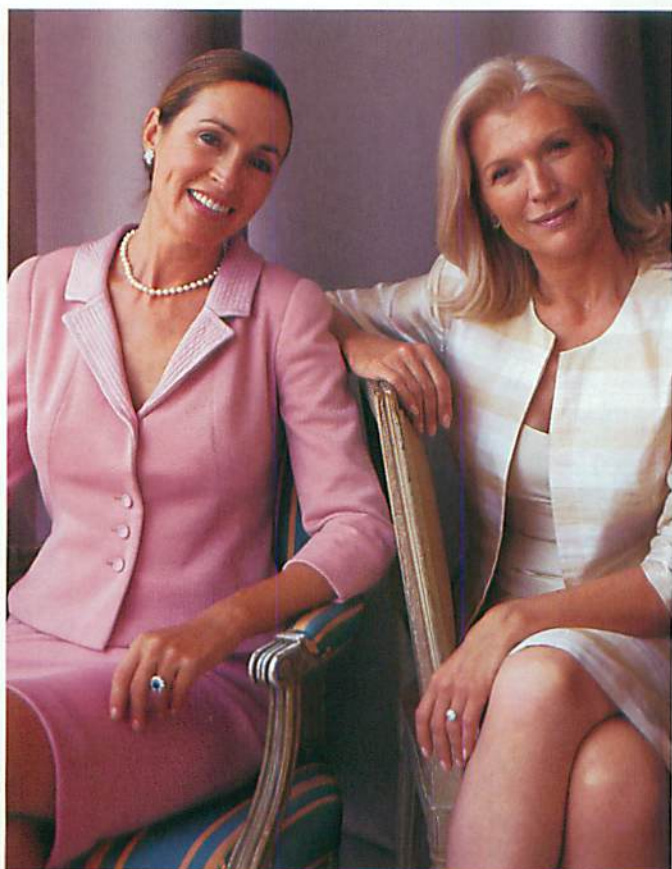


Today, a suit remains one of the easiest ways for a woman to dress up. Unlike, say, a stiffly corseted gown or a sinuous, cowl-backed dress, a suit doesn't need a few practice runs for her to get used to wearing it. She doesn't have to fuss with recalcitrant shoulder straps or drooping shawls. She can remove the jacket if a crowded ballroom becomes stuffy or put it on when an Indian-summer afternoon turns chilly. What's more, a suit is the perfect cover-up for bare arms during a religious ceremony in a church or synagogue.

Depending on its fabric and styling, a suit can be appropriate for almost any kind of wedding, day or evening. In general, luxurious fabrics like duchesse satin, four-ply crepe, and velvet are more suited to the evening hours than sturdier materials like shantung, wool, and silk faille. Embellishments like jeweled buttons, beaded embroidery, and lace trim are also more appropriate for a black-tie event.

Choosing a style—a fitted suit with a short jacket, a flowing skirt paired with a long cardigan jacket—is a matter of personal preference and figure type. Even if a woman has always worn suits with long jackets and A-line skirts, she should try on different silhouettes, like a slim cardigan suit or a suit with an Empire jacket and straight skirt; she might find herself pleasantly surprised by a different choice. "Suits today come in a wide



variety of styles," says Steele, "from something slim and classic in taupe silk to an embellished pink-and-orange cocktail suit." Mothers who like the idea of a suit but want something a bit more special can try a variation on the theme: a long jacket or coat paired with a matching shift dress.

Usually, a suit with a long skirt is best for a formal evening wedding, especially if the bride is wearing a billowy gown with a cathedral veil and the attendants are in long dresses. But that isn't always the case. "I've had mothers choose long skirts for afternoon weddings, often at their daughters' urging," says Josephine Sasso, president of Josephine Sasso, a women's clothing company with stores in New York City and Paoli, Pennsylvania. "It's a more romantic look."

Although pantsuits have been acceptable wedding-guest attire for three decades, they are not always acceptable for

**TAILORED LOOKS** Fabrics like wool and silk shantung, in pastel colors and simple designs, are best for daytime weddings; detailing provides interest. Left: A pink suit is accented by a quilted satin collar and satin buttons; a plaid shantung jacket and skirt is sophisticated but not too formal for afternoon. Above: A delicate spray of stephanotis sets off a simple robin's-egg-blue wool suit.