

Fashion Outlook

Mini skirts turn eyes to hosiery and shoes

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FASHION



Mary
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Long, lean and leggy. That's the fashion trend as skirt lengths creep upward.

Thanks to the renewed popularity of the mini — its first strong revival since the early 1970s — women have been dressing short and sassy, from Seventh Avenue to Main Street, USA.

Like it or not, short skirts are back to stay — at least for a while.

For fall, major designers on both sides of the Atlantic have stepped up the leggy look with cocktail dresses, suits and simple little wool skirts. Yves Saint Laurent, Calvin Klein, Donna Karan and many others have raised hemlines from a conservative 2 inches above the knee to a gutsy 8 or 10 inches.

Previews of spring lines reveal the same fascination with peekaboo leg lengths. Why all the hoopla? Because, in a word, it looks new.

Women who believe they must now discard every skirt in their closets and fret anew at their figures may be protesting too much. While many skirts are being shown (and some bought) at 18-inch lengths, most that are shipped to stores are a respectable 23 to 25 inches.

Short skirts — not necessarily minis — are de rigueur.

Whatever length you arrive at, knees are definitely showing this fall. Women need to pay careful attention to shoes and hosiery to pull off a successful look.

"I think that when you're dealing with a short skirt, dressing the leg is just as important as dressing the body," says Cathy Volker, vice president of merchandising for Hanes Hosiery.

Volker has several suggestions for choosing appropriate hosiery to complement the new shorter skirts:

Remember that opaque hosiery is the rage for daytime and sheer is recommended for late-day and evening looks. In both cases, black is the number-one seller in the stores now, with brown a close second.

"It takes time for a woman's eye to become comfortable with seeing shorter skirts again," Volker observes, "and the easiest transition into short skirts is a monochromatic look, where your hosiery matches the hemline of your skirt."

When choosing patterns, go for the subtler ones, like the new cables, herringbones and stripes. "Patterns are a lot subtler than we've seen in the past," she says. "When you're bringing that much focus to the leg with short skirts, you don't want a pattern that screams."

Volker advocates choosing sheers for evening, especially since the newest dressy shoes are those with high three-inch heels.

When it comes to appropriate footwear for short skirts, designers are fairly well divided between flats and heels.

"The designers, in the main, have made a statement that higher heels are the correct proportion for short skirts," states Eli Footer, marketing

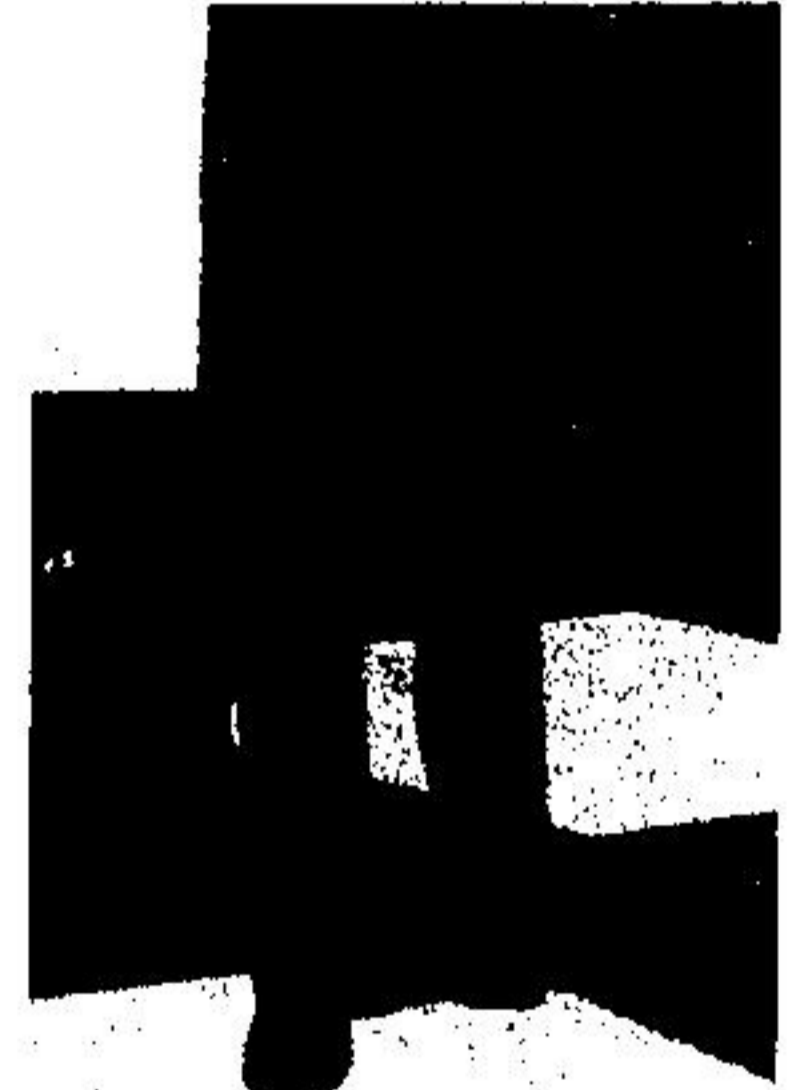
director of footwear for both Anne Klein and Yves Saint Laurent. "But other designers, like Saint Laurent, feel that flat and low heels are a correct proportion."

As with skirt lengths, here a woman's personal preference should be her guideline. While black is the number-one selling color for any height, Footer says that "the greatest demand and the shortest supply" is for black suede pumps with three-inch or slightly higher heels.

Over-the-knee boots are another hot alternative to wear with short skirts, because they create an unin-



BLACK is the leading hosiery color for fall. These Hanes Diamond Arrow hose with mock black seam (about \$6) are a flirty evening accompaniment to a short skirt.



OVER-THE-KNEE boots are a new option for miniskirt aficionados. Donna Karan's brown suede boots retail for about \$775.

errupted visual line from hem to foot. Extra-high boots were strongly suggested by Klein's and Karan's daytime fashions. These extra-long suede leg coverings can run to around \$450 at Anne Klein and \$795 at Calvin Klein; Maude Frizon's waist-high napa leather boots are about \$950.

"We think that over-the-knee boots appeal to an attitude, not an age," says Phyllis Johnson, director of trend merchandising for Dayton Hudson's 34 department stores.

"Any woman who is self-confident and has a sense of adventure can carry short skirts and over-the-knee boots. The look is new and fun to wear. And, hopefully, that's what our business is all about."

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