

Shopping for Children's Clothing: Shopping Suggestions

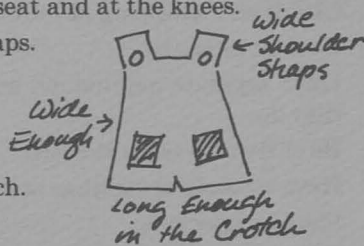
Children's clothing is expensive. It takes skill and good judgment to buy clothing which matches your budget and their clothing needs. Learn to compare price with quality and to determine what quality is needed for different occasions. Children have a way of outgrowing and out-wearing their clothes at an alarming rate. Therefore, careful thought should be given to the garments selected.

COMFORT FEATURES

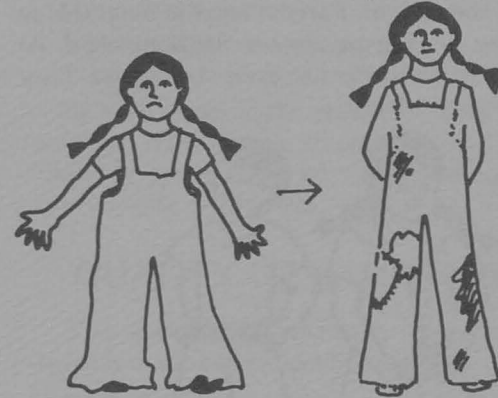
Garments for children should be comfortable. They should not restrict the child's movements.

Look for clothing that:

- Is lightweight.
- Has adequate fullness.
- Is wide enough in the seat and at the knees.
- Has wide shoulder straps.
- Is soft and absorbent.
- Fits smoothly.
- Has roomy sleeves.
- Is long enough in crotch.



Buying a garment that is too large is not a good choice. Not only will the child look strange, but the garment will limit activity. A garment that is too large is not as safe as one that fits. Another factor to consider is that the garment may fade or be worn out before the garment is the right size.



Don't buy a too large garment... it may fade or wear out before it's the right size...

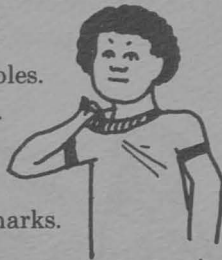
Sometimes garments are made with specific growth features. These features can be adjusted as the child grows.

Look for styles that have:

- deep hems
- cuffs
- adjustable shoulder straps
- waistlines a little loose
- part elastic in waist
- growth tucks in bodice, sleeve and/or hem
- deep cut armholes
- stretch fabrics.

Avoid garments that:

- Bind at the neck or armholes.
- Have a collar for toddlers.
- Have scratchy fabric.
- Are heavy and bulky.
- Have elastic that leaves marks.

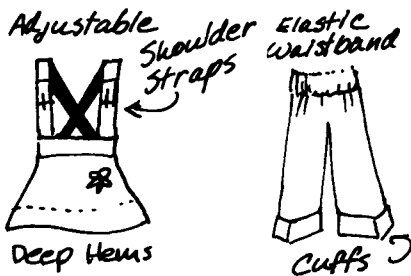


Avoid garments that bind at neck or arms...

GROWTH FEATURES

Certain styles of garments can be worn longer as a child is growing. Look for garments that:

- Have no waistline.
- Have raglan, kimono or no sleeves.
- Are separates.

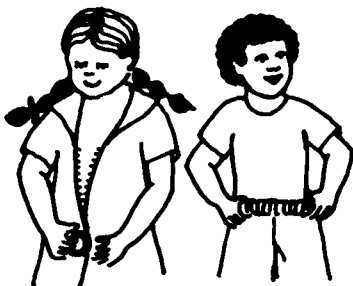


Most of today's fabrics will leave a mark when garments are let out. However, this line can be concealed by top stitching, a decorative stitch or a trim.



SELF-HELP FEATURES

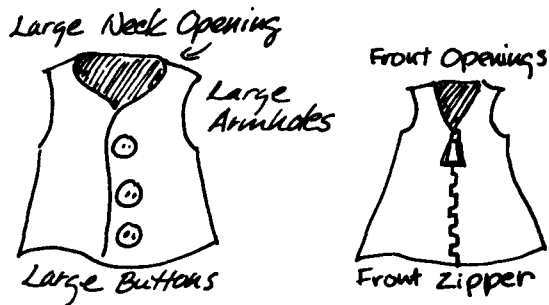
Young children like to display their independence by dressing themselves. Parents need to keep this in mind as they are buying clothes for their child. At age two they begin to want to dress themselves. They want to be independent.



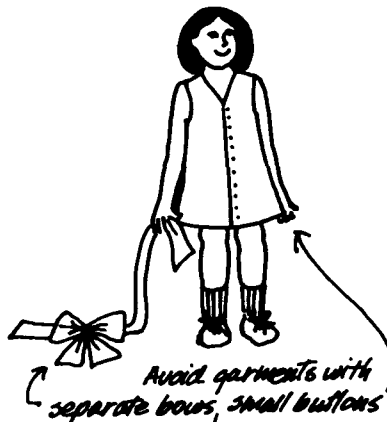
Garments with Easy-on, Easy-off Features

Therefore, look for garments that have easy-on and easy-off features, such as:

- simple styles
- front openings
- easy to tell front from back
- large neck openings
- stretch waistbands
- large buttons or fasteners
- large armholes
- front zippers with large pulls
- stretch fabrics
- large buttons on suspenders
- flat, slightly grooved buttons



Avoid garments with separate belts, sashes, bows, small buttons or openings in back.

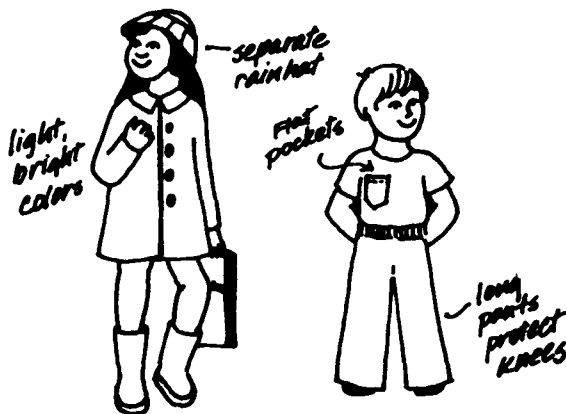


SAFETY MEASURES

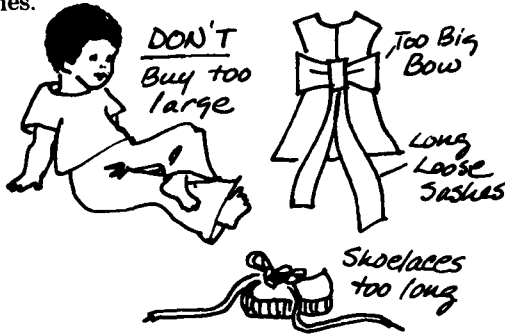
Safety is another important factor to consider when shopping for children's clothing.

Children's clothing should:

- Be light or bright.
- Have separate rainhat or hood that turns when they do.
- Be of flame retardant fabric.
- Have securely sewn trims and pockets.
- Have flat pockets.
- Have straps that are secured.
- Have long pants to protect knees.



Avoid these garments as they may cause accidents: cuffs so large they catch on "things", shoe laces too long, sleeves too big and loose, garments too long, drawstring necklines, big bows and loose sashes.

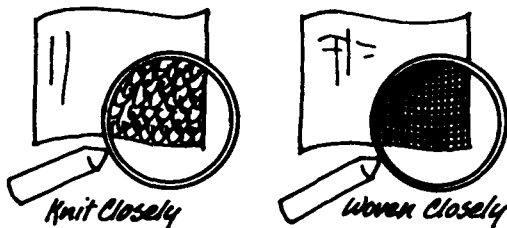


FABRIC SELECTION

The fabric used in a child's garment should be carefully examined. Fabrics that are closely woven or knitted will be more durable and will maintain their shape longer. Garments that stretch allow for more freedom of movement. Cottons are comfortable because they are absorbent. Man-made fibers (such as polyester, nylon, acrylic) resist wrinkling and are easy care. Blends of cotton and man-made fibers combine comfort and crisp freshness. In addition, fabrics may be treated with special finishes—such as permanent press, flame resistant, soil release—that make them easier to care for and fresher looking.

Consider carefully:

- fiber content
- care of fabric
- shrinkage
- colorfastness



CHECKING FIT

Be sure children try on garments before you decide to purchase them. Remember that garments which do not fit are uncomfortable.

Check each of these fitting points:

- NECKLINE**—Does not bind or gape.
- SHOULDERS**—Wide enough and at the same time don't hang off the shoulders.
- SLEEVES**—Roomy armholes and sleeves, but not too tight or too full.

CUFFS—Slightly loose.

WAISTLINE—Slightly loose.

HIPLINE—Slightly loose.

CROTCH—Ample ease in width and length.

LENGTH—Not too long—which hampers movements.

ROOMINESS—Outer garments large enough to fit over other garments.

BLOUSES OR SHIRTS—long tails that will stay tucked in.



MINIMUM EASE ALLOWANCES

Chest or Bust: three-four inches—six inches for jacket or coat.

Waist: one inch.

Hips: two inches.

Waist Length: one-fourth inch.

Be sure to see if the child can move freely in the garment. Have him sit, stoop, bend, reach and stretch. Children are active and their clothing should not restrict their movements.

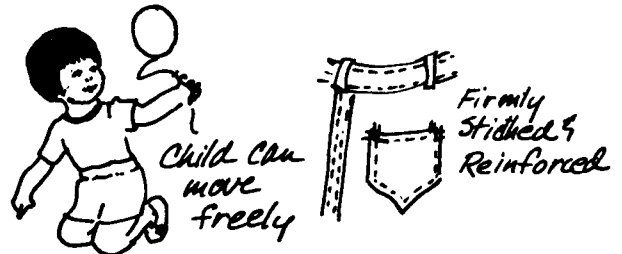
QUALITY OF WORKMANSHIP

You should look carefully at how well a garment is made before deciding to buy.

Look for:

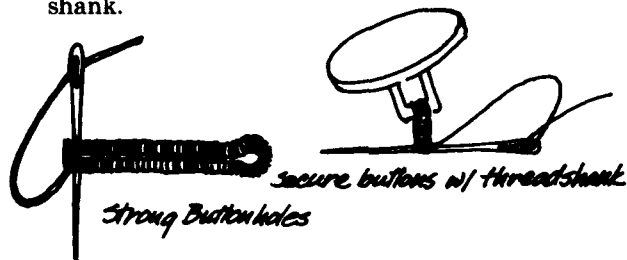
Seams that are flat, smooth, firmly stitched and finished to prevent raveling.

Reinforcements at points of strain areas—pockets, knees, elbows, plackets, crotch.



Buttonholes that are firm, strong and closely stitched.

Buttons that are securely sewn and have a thread-shank.



Stitches that are close and fastened at ends.

Cut on-grain so garments will maintain their shape.

Flat-felled seams in playclothes and sleepwear.

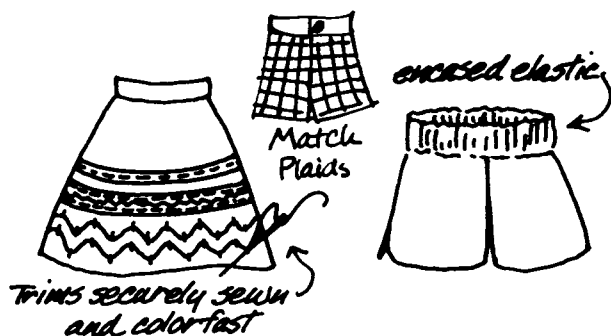
Trimmings that are colorfast and securely sewn.

Hems that are wide, even and well sewn.

Interfacing behind fasteners and in facings and collars.

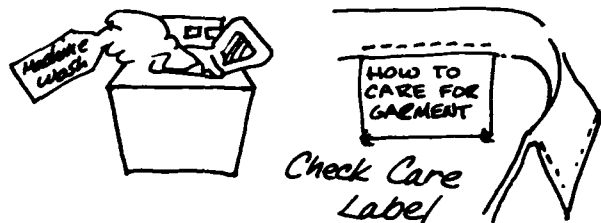
Plaids and stripes that match.

Elastic that is encased.



CARE

Carefully check the permanent care label on how to care for the garment. Select items that are machine washable, colorfast, preshrunk and those that require little or no ironing in order to save you time.



SAVE MONEY

Stretch the clothing dollar by buying garments that:

- Are labeled as to fiber content and care.
- Are sturdy fabrics.
- Have adjustable features.
- Are suitable for year 'round wear.
- Are well-constructed.



REMEMBER TO:

- Buy a few garments that will serve many purposes.
- Put the most money into the garments most frequently worn.
- Take advantage of sales **only** if the garment is needed.

Arranged for use in Minnesota by Sherri A. Johnson, Extension Textiles and Clothing Specialist, University of Minnesota. Originally prepared by Nadine Hackler, Extension Textiles and Clothing Specialist, University of Florida.

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