



# JEANS

An estimated 450 million pairs of jeans are purchased every year, making them a staple of the American wardrobe. Indeed, jeans are the most widely produced piece of apparel in the U.S. Jeans have long been a cyclical market being driven in the main by factors such as employment conditions, productivity, fashion trends, lifestyle factors, and celebrity endorsements. Manufacturers and retailers are constantly challenged to maintain the market by staying on top of fads, changing tastes and consumer desires for different styles of jeans.

Every brand and every style of jeans will fit a little differently, but knowing what to look for will help narrow down the selection to just those jeans that will look great on you. The type of fabric, the cut of the jean and the details can all affect how jeans fit.

## Denim is denim is denim -- or is it?

You may have thought that all blue jeans were cut from the same cloth, but this isn't so. Variations in the weave, the fibers and the finishes all create differences.

### Weave

- All denim is cotton twill -- a weave that has a slight diagonal to it, but that's where the similarities end. Some denim is a left-hand twill (the diagonal on the dark side runs from lower right to the upper left), which has a very soft feel. A few types of denim have broken twill (the diagonal line changes directions). All other denim is a right-hand twill (the diagonal on the dark side runs from the lower left to the upper right), which is the most common and has a durable feel.

### The cotton

- The quality of the cotton the denim is made of will affect the look and feel of the jeans. Fine cotton fabric is made from longer stands of the fiber, giving the jean fabric a softer feeling and a smoother look. High-quality cotton also lasts longer because there are fewer small fibers to rub off -- this is often what you are paying for when you buy premium jeans.

### Dyes and finishes

- Most jeans are made of denim that was dyed before it was woven into cloth (this is also called "yarn-dyed"); other jeans are dyed after they have been constructed into jeans. Jeans dyed after construction may have a more saturated color, but it may also fade faster. Blue jeans are dyed with the familiar indigo blue, but there are new innovations in denim dyes all the time. For example, some manufacturers layer the indigo dye with a yellow sulphur dye to give jeans an aged, dirty-on-purpose look.
- After the pants are constructed, many manufacturers put the jeans through finishing processes. A few terms you may see in product descriptions are:
  - **Stonewashed:** Jeans are washed with chemicals or actual stones -- usually pumice stones -- to lighten and soften the denim. Occasionally, you may even find a few small pumice stones in the pockets when you first put on your new stonewashed jeans.
  - **Sandblasted:** To give new jeans a broken-in appearance, the jeans are blasted with sand in areas where wear would occur naturally. This can sometimes lighten the denim, and lighter areas will draw attention to that body part. If you buy sandblasted jeans, make sure the light area is on a part you want to emphasize.
  - **Whiskered:** Crease lines, called whiskers, are created across the lap to look like the jeans have been sat in many times. Whiskers are printed on, sanded on or created with lasers. They are horizontal lines, so if you are worried about your legs looking too heavy, choose jeans with subtle whiskers or none at all.

### Stretch

- Many people love stretch jeans, and for women with more curves, stretch denim can be very flattering. Women with flat rear ends will want to avoid stretch jeans, however, because the stretch will just emphasize the lack of curves.



## What makes jeans fit differently?

### Legs

- **Boot cut:** Boot cut jeans flare slightly at the bottom. The slight flare -- not a bell-bottom flare -- balances out large hips and heavy derrieres.
- **Wide leg:** With a fitted waist, wide leg jeans can be a stylish alternative to your other jeans.
- **Straight leg:** Straight leg jeans are not as baggy as wide leg jeans, but they share the same stovepipe shape that lacks any flare at the ankle. The straight line of straight leg jeans gives a long, lean look to your legs.
- **Skinny:** Skinny jeans are slim-fitting jeans that are narrow all the way to the ankle. These are the perfect jeans to wear tucked into a pair of boots because they don't have extra fabric around the ankles.
- **Boy cut:** With slim hips that sit a little higher and with straight legs. Because of the relaxed fit, these jeans can be the perfect casual jeans, or you can cuff them to your calf and dress them up.

### Rise

- The rise is the length from the crotch to the waistband. A standard rise is about 30 inches, while low-rise jeans -- also called hipsters, hip-huggers or low-cut jeans -- have about a 20-inch rise. Low-rise jeans can elongate a short torso, but on a long torso, they can be a bit too revealing in the back.

### Seat

- As long as the seat of your jeans fits well and is flattering, a tailor can fix just about everything else. Even if you prefer other pants with a loose fit in the seat, choose jeans with a snug seat. The center seam gives definition to your curves. Back pockets make or break a backside.

## Understand the Washes of Jeans

- Jeans come in a number of distinct cuts and washes. Figure out which are right for you before selecting the perfect pair of jeans.
  - Stonewashed jeans: have a lighter, more broken-in appearance.
  - Dark jeans: The deep indigo color of dark jeans make them the ideal jeans for a night out on the town.
  - Distressed jeans: Holes, shredding, and crinkles create the highly worn appearance of distressed jeans.

## What does a consumer look for?

### Seams

- Flat fell seams have two rows of stitching and are enclosed on both the outside and inside of the jeans. Seams of this type leave no open seam allowances to unravel during wear and laundering. Make certain the seams are neatly constructed and firmly stitched. Where seams are not flat fell, they should be serged (overcast with thread) to cover the raw edge and reduce raveling. Seams that join at the crotch and in the back should meet accurately for smooth contour, comfort, and durability of the garment.

### Waistband

- A waistband made of two or more layers of fabric will reduce stretching in the waist area. If the jeans have no waistband, look for interfacing (an extra layer of firm fabric sewn into the waist seam for stability).

### Reinforcements

- Look for thread bar tacks or rivets at places of stress like corners of pockets, belt loops and the bottom of the zipper placket.

### Zipper

- The zipper will be more durable if the fabric on both sides has been turned under and stitched. Because denim fabric is so heavy, a metal zipper offers more durability than a nylon zipper.

## Select the Right Jeans for Your Body Type

With so many designer jeans on the market, it's important to do your homework and select the right pair of jeans for your body type.

- **Slim body types:** Slimmer body types look great in a variety of jeans. Look for jeans that run straight from the hips through the knee, with a slight flare at the leg opening. Low-rise jeans with a high back and lower front are another good choice. Or, if you're looking for a snug fit, choose jeans that are tight around the waist and backside.



- Curvy body types: If you have great curves to accentuate, choose jeans that run straight from the hips through the knee with a slight or more generous flare at the leg opening. A wide boot-cut silhouette is also flattering.
- Athletic body types: If you have athletic legs and narrow hips, consider a low-rise jean with a contoured waistband. Legs that taper out to a graceful and generous boot cut are also flattering—but without giving you the retro bell-bottom look. Or, to give the appearance of wider hips and a fuller backside, choose a cigarette-style jean.
- Full-figured body types: Choose a traditional five-pocket-style jean that isn't too snug and has a little give. Many jeans woven with spandex stretch nicely to your frame. Remember also that a slight flare at the leg opening, such as a boot cut, will help to balance a wider or fuller figure, as well as make your legs look longer. Always opt for jeans in darker shades, as they'll have a naturally slimming effect.

**Caring for your jeans - Here are a few ideas for denim care:**

- Cold wash will keep the color darker, longer. Cold will also prevent shrinkage.
- Warm water will shrink jeans, but may get out tough stains. BEWARE: don't wash jeans with whites unless you want to turn all your clothes blue!
- Air dry jeans for the least shrinkage and the least fading.
- Use a warm iron to get out wrinkles.
- Turn jeans inside out, to preserve the dark color.
- To keep white denim looking brand new wash in warm or hot water. Pre-treat stains and re-wash if stains are still visible before the drying cycle.
- Wash and dry your denim before hemming or altering.
- Consider dry cleaning very expensive jeans. The process will remove dirt but won't affect the wash as much as a machine.