

Can shorts ever look chic?

Shorts are one of this summer's biggest trends, but it's a look which divides

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Will you wear shorts this summer? One of our fashion editors explains why you should give them a go - and how to get it right - while another offers her alternative take...

For - Caroline Leaper



CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

Tailored linen shorts, £29.50, [Marks & Spencer](#)

There is a very real danger of appearing shapeless in the summer. Between voluminous blouses and billowing maxi dresses, an 'easy breezy' silhouette can quickly overwhelm the wearer, their figure lost to an excess of fabric and floral prints.

My solution? Shorts. Waist-defining and sharp, yet still cool and casual, I've always felt that shorts could provide me with some structure, when most other hot-weather fashion options would not.

But my beloved shorts don't appeal to all, I'm aware. Despite strong, chic patronages in fashion history (see [Jackie Kennedy](#) in chino shorts and pearls at Cape Cod in the Fifties, or Rachel from Friends wearing plaid boxers in the Nineties) there are many women out there who would still swerve them, justifiably concerned that they expose pancake-like knees and veiny shins in a way that a pleated midi skirt doesn't.

It's true, badly cut shorts can leave little room to hide. But this season I would argue that only the most flattering styles have come to the fore, and you don't need [Naomi Campbell's](#) legs to wear them. Denim 'Daisy Duke' cutoffs are barely to be found in the shops, neither are hotpants. The best shorts of summer 2020 offer an almost A-line silhouette - they have a flattering high waist, graze just above the knee so as to draw the eye away from the actual (supposedly dodgy) kneecap, and look almost (but not strictly) tailored, in sturdy cotton twill and linen chambray fabrics. They avoid all boy scout associations thanks to the slight flare - but it's nothing so extreme as to be mistaken for culottes. Tuck any plain vest top into a pair of these shorts, add chunky sandals, and, behold, an instant, pulled-together outfit.



Board shorts, £95.20, [Whistles](#); Belted pleated shorts, £365, [Tibi at Net-a-porter](#); Pinstripe, £62.97, [Scotch & Soda](#); Tie belt shorts, £17.99, [H&M](#); Khaki shorts, £210, [Asceno at Browns Fashion](#)

At the start of spring, Net-A-Porter's global buying director, Elizabeth von der Goltz, declared that shorts were predicted to become one of the retailer's key trend items of the summer - she invested in 180 styles for customers to choose from, including Bermuda shorts and pedal pushers, which is 30% more than they stocked last year.

On the catwalk, Dior showed boxy cotton shorts in toile and tie dye prints, while [Dolce and Gabbana's](#) safari styles featured good utility pockets. The 'shorts are back' message has filtered to the high street with ease, too. Some of the best can be found at Marks and Spencer (here I'm wearing their linen chambray Bermuda shorts) and Arket, which has five variations of its paper bag waist style. A friend who was previously committed to exclusively wearing printed dresses in lockdown has switched allegiance, thanks to the Arket ones, swearing by their generous, elasticated waistband.

The other type of shorts which have boomed in recent weeks are jersey lounge shorts - ASOS says its sales were up 90% on this time last year, and they've shifted over 18,000 pairs since lockdown began in March. It's worth pointing out that the most figure-flattering shorts can also be incredibly comfy - like wearing your joggers, if you know what to look for with a gently shirred waist.

Whatever style you're considering, my best tip when shopping for shorts is to buy a size up. What you don't want, regardless of cut, is to wear anything that even looks like it could be a tad too small. You want to be able to sit down and still fit at least one finger between the hem of the material and the curviest peak of your thigh. If you can't, that's when you will run into problems. Spray on shorts are the ones which will dig in, cut off and ride up. And no one wants to look like they've got a wedgie on an otherwise glorious summer's day, do they?

Against - Emily Cronin



CREDIT: Andrew Crowley

Revere collar jumpsuit, £66, [Boden](#)

Let's play "Guess That Garment". I'm thinking of a clothing item that cuts into the waistline at a spot guaranteed to highlight the tummy. Then it divides into two tubes that encase the upper thigh in a sausage-like manner. And just for laughs, these sausage-leg-tubes terminate abruptly, just above the knee, in a location scientifically proven to draw the eye to frowny kneecaps.

I'm describing [shorts](#), of course – one of the worst fashion trends ever inflicted on women.

They're my personal fashion kryptonite. Part of it is the baggage that shorts carry. The high-waisted, pleat-fronted, A-line short that fashion has reclaimed this season speaks of a certain negative mumsiness that all mums, myself included, strive to avoid.



Anka woven jumpsuit, £95, [Faithfull the Brand at Selfridges](#); Bay belted linen-blend jumpsuit, £220, [Staud at Net-a-porter](#); Blue boilersuit, £180, [LF Markey](#); Khaki jumpsuit, £119.20, [Whistles](#); Papaya red, £95, [Toast](#)

Which is why it's wonderful that no one ever really wears shorts. For those occasions that require a touch more tailored approach, smart jumpsuits save the day.

What's great about a jumpsuit is that it has all the throw-and-go ease of a dress, but often seems more styled. Get the fit right and they skim over thighs and knees. Get the length of the leg right (a few inches above the ankle) and you'll look taller; the built-in belts accentuate the waist.

There's a jumpsuit for every wearer. If you fancy something effortless, I can recommend Stalf (women swear by the British sustainable brand's Cocoon suit) and Beyond Nine (a striped-linen style I picked up a few years ago is still going strong). For something more structured, a sleeveless, button-front style with a waist tie can look sweet and vintagey. A collared style has that extra bit of sharpness.

Long live the jumpsuit.