

# How To Find Your Vintage Fashion Era:

## An Introductory Guide

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Whether you're thinking of exploring the wonderful world of vintage clothing for the first time, or considering a vintage-inspired style shift, it will be one fashion decision you won't regret. In fact, it's highly likely you'll find yourself addicted to the thrill of the vintage fashion chase, and end up devoting the balance of your wardrobe space to house all your 'new' outfits.

While fashion silhouettes varied greatly throughout any given decade, rather than feeling overwhelmed by all the different style options, it can be really useful to narrow down your preferences to a single era (at least at first). To help you on your vintage way, I've created a vintage fashion era 'cheat sheet' based around iconic, fashion-friendly films.

To first choose your fashion era, you must know your fashion era:

### The 'Flapper' 1920s - The Great Gatsby

While it was a film made many years later, the cinematic adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel 'The Great Gatsby', provides a fine example of how fashion from the 1920s should look and

move. A reaction to the horror of war, the 1920s became known for decadence, abandonment and living for the moment. This air of change and fast-paced living is clearly demonstrated in the fashions of the day - hemlines rose, outfits became less form-fitting and waistlines dropped.

**Style Notes:** Think heavily-beaded sleeveless flapper dresses and form-fitting cloche hats. The straight up and down style is great for those with a naturally slim physique.

### The 'Hollywood' 1930s - Gone With The Wind

In the midst of a worldwide economic depression, the shallow indulgences of the 1920s no longer seemed appropriate. People sought escape in the fantastical world of cinema with outfits such as the glamorous gowns worn by Vivien Leigh in 'Gone With The Wind', influencing the fashion ideals of women everywhere. Although designs still favoured a slim appearance, a more natural silhouette was embraced, with bias cut dresses designed to highlight curves.

**Style Notes:** Bias cuts are flattering for those with

curves, but slinky fabrics do highlight any figure imperfections. Opt for dresses with a fuller cut and designs made from heavier fabrics.

### The 'Noir' 1940s - Casablanca

Fashions of the 1940s were heavily influenced by military design, with a strong silhouette typified by padded shoulders, fitted waists and a crisp tailored look. Refer to Ingrid Bergman in 'Casablanca' for how 1940s fashion can be both conservative and refined. After the war, Christian Dior unveiled his 'New Look', which paid tribute to the female form in spectacular fashion - nipped in waists and extravagantly full skirts saw a return to femininity.

**Style Notes:** The strong shapes of 1940s skirt suits and peplum layers favour the slim, but can overwhelm a curvier figure. The soft, draped dresses of the era skim the body and flatter most.

### The 'Elegant' 1950s - Rear Window

Building on the return to femininity, the hourglass silhouette became a trademark of the era. Clothing was softer and prettier, with precise accessorising becoming more important than ever. This romantic style is showcased by Grace Kelly in 'Rear Window', with her dramatically full skirts and sophisticated fashion sensibility. The styles of the 1950s are perfect for those with curves, as they are designed to highlight and flatter the figure.

**Style Notes:** Full circle skirts skim the hips and thighs, while tight pencil skirts draw attention to the female form in a different way. Mix and match separates are a typical 1950s style.

### The 'Sweeping' 1960s - Breakfast at Tiffany's



An era of sweeping social change, the 1960s saw fashion undergo its own revolution. The decade initially favoured sophisticated fashion like that portrayed in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's', but looking cool soon became more important. Fashion was fresh and fun, with designers becoming more experimental. This decade saw the birth of fashion movements like mod (bold use of colour and exaggerated patterns) and hippy (romantic floral fabrics and psychedelic designs).

**Style Notes:** Mod style A-line dresses and mini-skirts are particularly flattering for slim women, while looser shift dresses and hippy-inspired fashions work well for most figures.

### The 'Fusion' 1970s - Annie Hall

The previous decade was all about change, so the 1970s saw a vast range of clothing styles with music acting as a key influence. The 1970s therefore became a decade where a whole host of different styles did their best to co-exist. Often dismissed as a time when bad fashion reigned supreme, some really innovative fashion was produced and broke new ground. Think of the fantastic 'man-style' outfits of Diane Keaton in 'Annie Hall', complete with neckties and vests.

**Style Notes:** A variety of fashions appeared in the 1970s - ruffled peasant styles, draped halterneck dresses, maxi skirts, and disco hot pants - there's literally something for everyone.

So hopefully you've now got a feel for the fashion of each main vintage era, and you're feeling more confident about embarking on a vintage fashion adventure.

Most importantly of all, don't forget to have fun!

*Tracey Sargent*

*Tracey is obsessed with all things vintage, and loves making the history and beauty of secondhand clothing a part of her own fashion future. She also blogs about her thoughts at [quietpaws.com](http://quietpaws.com)*

*(illustrations by Lee Sargent - [quityourdayjob.com.au](http://quityourdayjob.com.au))*

