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Make the maxi dress work for your body shape by [Sean Burke](#)

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Summer is looming and the feminine, dreamy maxi-dress returns again. This perennial favourite provides the perfect look for summer holidays, long lunches and balmy evenings.

Anyone can pull off the maxi-dress look, but to really achieve the wow factor, it's important to pick a maxi dress style that works well with your figure.

Petite women should look for halter and v-neck styles that elongate their frame. An empire waist will also help elongate the legs, as will maxi dresses with vertical mini-pleats, which are popular this season. Look for maxi-dresses that skim the floor, to again help create an illusion of height. Strapless styles are best avoided, as they will only shorten the figure more. Solid colours work best to elongate the body however if wanting prints, look for finer prints as large prints will overwhelm small frames. Vertical stripes will also help add height.

Curvy women should look for styles that are floaty, but form fitting, without being too clingy. Too much fabric can add on volume and look baggy, so go for an empire waist or cinch the waist with a thin belt. Avoid strapless styles as they stump the figure. Halter and v-neck styles will elongate the torso and neck, while helping create a silhouette.

Taller women can take their pick when it comes to maxi dresses. A fitted maxi dress will show off a lean figure, while a floating lip over a low neckline will help create a bigger bust, and allow tall, thin girls to enjoy the airy look, without drowning in too much fabric. If taller girls want to downplay their height, look for strapless styles, use wide belts to cinch the waist and look for horizontal strips and patterns.

The highstreet is teeming with different maxi dress styles for the new season, and there are several looks that are leading the charge.

Simple fitted jersey styles with rounded necks and razor backs in black, grey and olive are also popular again as are the ever-present Nordic look in white with blue or red strips.

Asymmetrical hemlines are giving this season's maxi dress a new edge, with drastic hemlines slashed from mini or knee length at the front to full length at the back. This is a look that works best if you have the pins for it, as the unique hemline attracts attention to the legs.

Airy maxi dresses are back this season with prints galore. Taffeta, chiffon, organza, silks and other sheer fabrics are everywhere, smattered with polka dots, animal prints, bold Hawaiian looks, colourful folk prints and more. On the flip side, there will also be single-colour airy maxi dresses in brighter-than-pastel colour such as coral, lemon, aqua, electric-blue, mint and lilac as well as simple white.

Understanding what style of maxi dress works well for your body type means you can make the most of the new seasons maxi dresses and find the perfect one to make you feel like you belong on a boardwalk in Monte Carlo or a beach club in Ibiza.

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[Sean Burke](#) - About Author:

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