

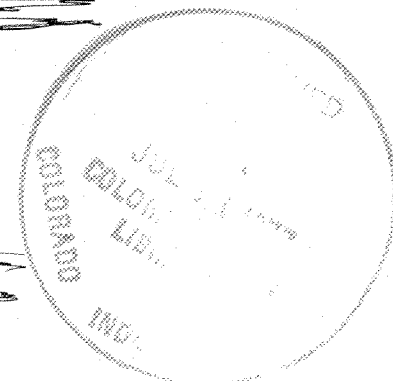
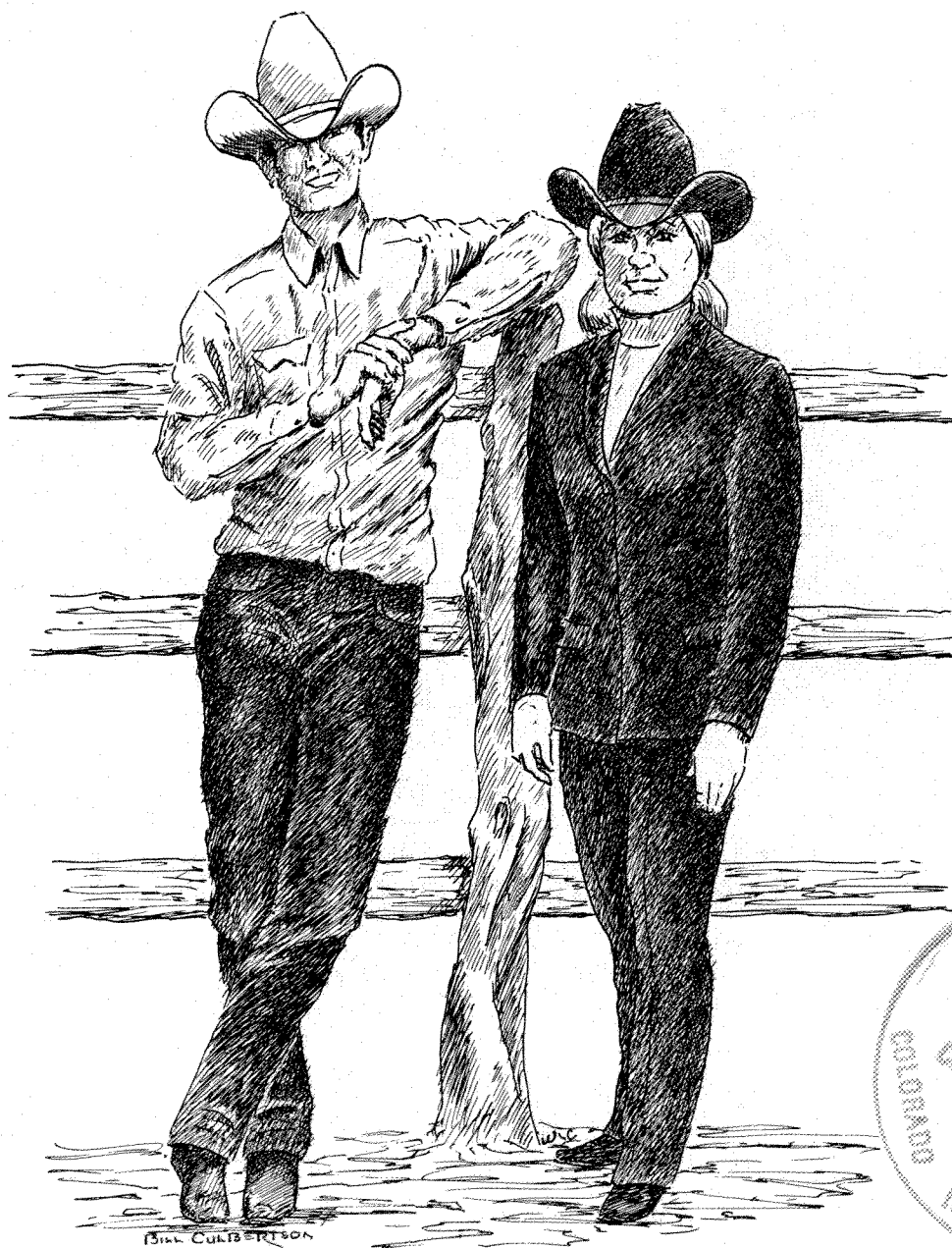
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Bulletin 493A

# WESTERN

# WEAR

# WISDOM



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## WESTERN WEAR WISDOM

### Acknowledgment

Special thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Forrest Luellen and daughter, Penny, of Laporte, Colorado, for sharing their knowledge of traditional fit and style in wearing western clothes in Colorado; to Penny who modeled a growing wardrobe of suits, blouses, vests, etc., made by her mother, Helena, and to Bill Culbertson for art work contained in this bulletin.

Prepared by Mildred A. Crawford, Extension Assistant Professor (Textiles and Clothing) and William R. Culbertson, Extension Associate Professor (Horse Specialist), Cooperative Extension Service, Colorado State University.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Lowell H. Watts, Director of Extension Service, Colorado State University.

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## SO YOU WANT TO WEAR WESTERN CLOTHES

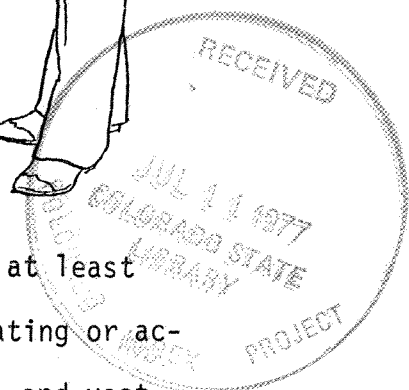
The beauty of western wear clothing is in the appearance of the wearer either walking or riding. The traditional look is in the fit, style, colors and grooming. These important factors provide the key to coordinating a wardrobe appropriate to the wearer and western riding culture.

Western wear may be too often associated with horses and worn only by "horse people." Today it is a clothing expression and is popular because it is casual, comfortable, dressy and characterizes a recreational sport.

A complete wardrobe consists of hats, boots, shirts or blouses, pants, vests, coats, suits, gloves, jewelry, scarves, belts, hosiery and undergarments. Many of these may be selected to coordinate with each other so that the number of complete ensembles totals more than the selected garments. Clothing costs may be reduced with careful planning.

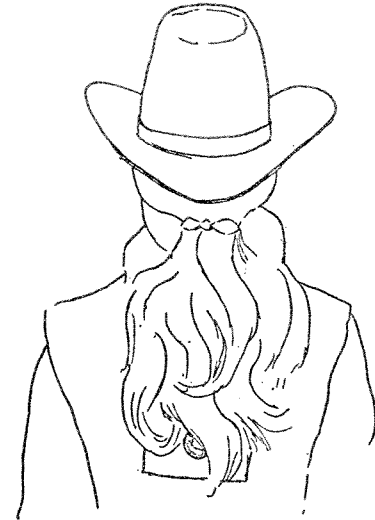
Hats and boots help accent an outfit when matched or at least coordinated. Pants and hat may be the same color. Coordinating or accenting colors can be in the accessory items, blouse, gloves and vest.

No matter how great the horse looks, all will be lost if the rider neglects his/her appearance. The wearer of western clothes will feel good and be assured of good grooming with a bath, clean, washed



hair and clean fingernails. Neatness is a trademark of the western wear attire, so boots must be clean, polished and shined. Good care makes them last longer.

Girls with long hair and riding in show competition should control the hair to the back, i.e., clasp, ribbon, or in a bun. Long hair must not cover show numbers on the rider's back.



## HATS

The authentic western hat has a shape all its own and is developed by the wearer to enhance the face shape. The brim and crown are steamed into shape. The perfect oval face shape appearance may be acquired with hair styling and hat shaping.

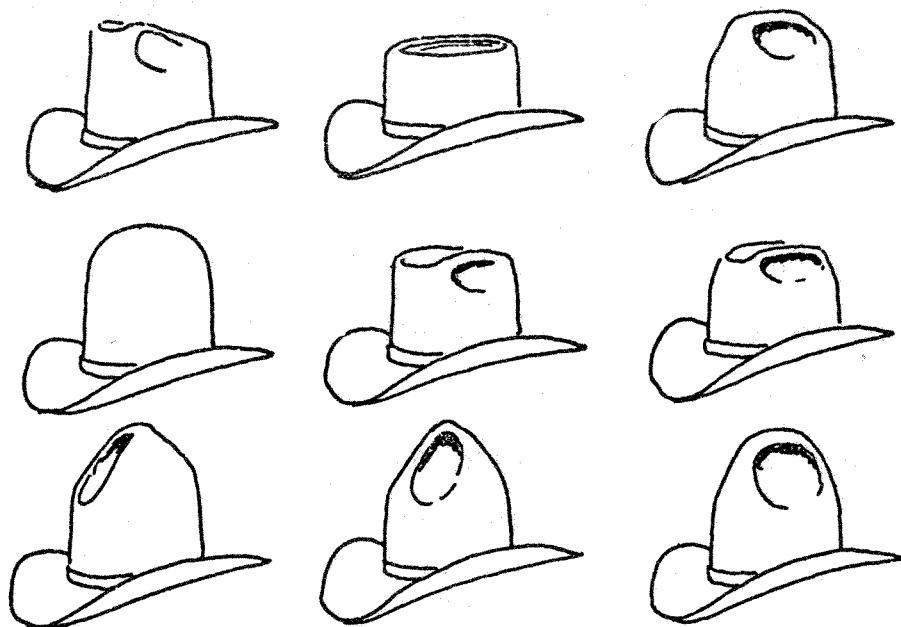
Since the western rider and his/her hat shall not be parted, it is important that a good quality hat be purchased. The sturdy felt can be shaped and reshaped into style and grace.

Good basic colors for hats which may be worn with several outfits are black, brown, sand, green and navy. Others which may enhance a wardrobe and may be effectively coordinated but are somewhat more limiting are red, white, purple, pink and yellow.

Shaping of the brim and crown is done with live steam. A quart size sauce pan or teakettle of water boiling will produce enough steam

to shape the brim into an oblong narrow brim. The crown may be indented to give the oval appearance.

Hat styles have names which have become associated with their use as well as character.



*Hat shapes, height of the crown and width of the brim vary. Select the size and style to fit the face.*

*The bottom row shows the old styles that are too extreme for the show ring.*

The way the person wears the hat is a personal preference. The manner in which he holds it when putting it on becomes a habit as well as part of the shaping. The horse "show" hat looks clean and well shaped from the beginning, but after several years of wear it may become worn and appear to have the "rodeo" look or the well-worn look. Keep it clean and blocked.

The hat usually sits on the head straight, fits snugly enough to stay on and rests about one inch above the ears. Avoid shoving the hat back while in the show ring as this gives a very casual, haphazard appearance. The natural curl of the brim develops as you put it on.

When purchasing a hat, take someone along to help select the most becoming size and shape. Use the mirror and look to see the overall appearance it gives from all angles.

Storage of the hat should be on its crown so that the brim does not curl up in front and back. Select a special place in the closet where there is room and it is free from dust.

Care and cleaning of the hat is very important if it is to last a long time and always look good. Clean and brush after each use and before storing. Brush around the crown and brim in the direction of the nap.

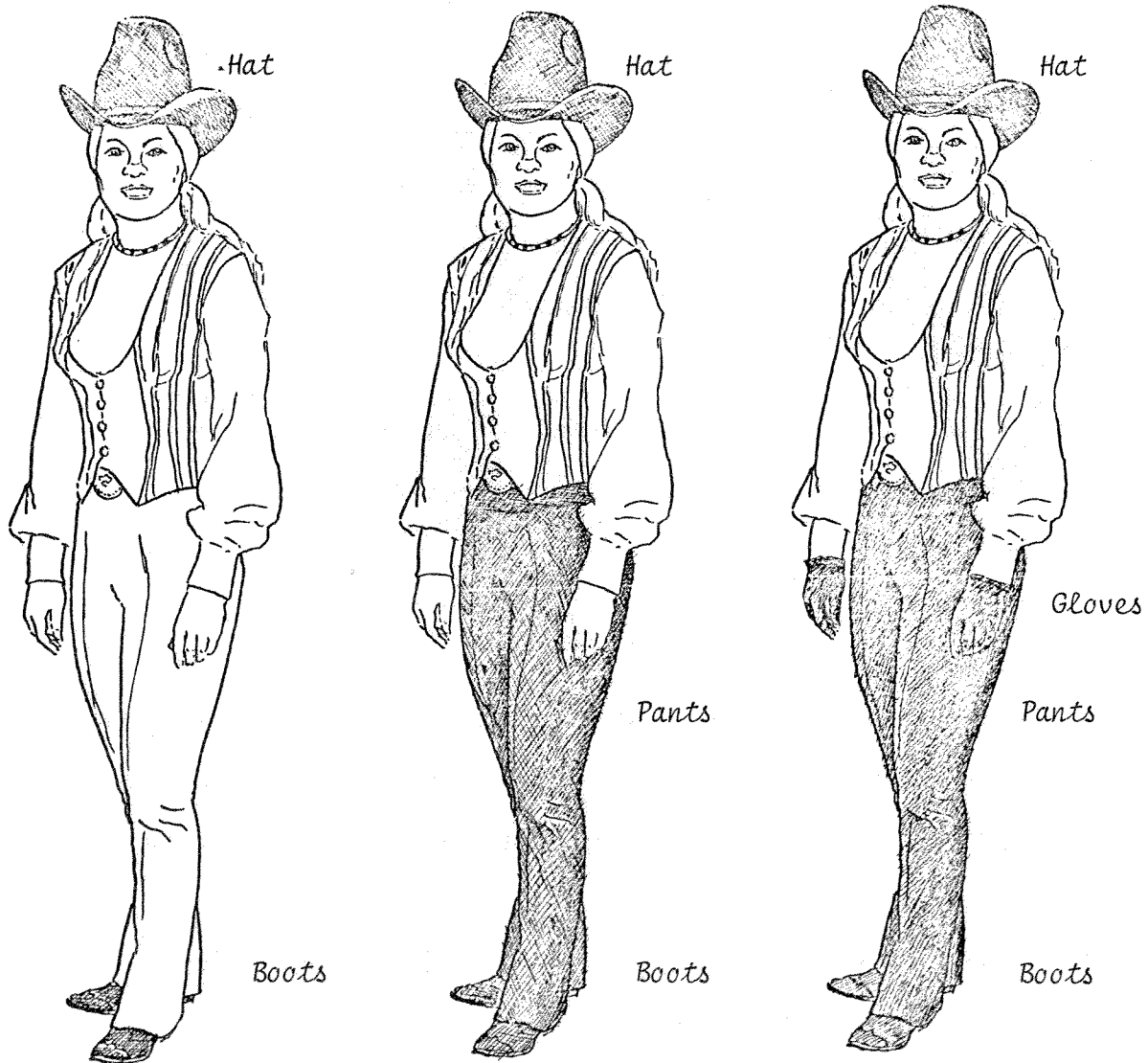
Hat cleaners made of a dry synthetic sponge can be used to brush. Use one sponge for white and other light colored hats and a different sponge for darker colored hats. The vacuum cleaner hose will loosen and collect grit from the grain of the felt. Steam will also help clean and renovate the felt.

To remove soiled, greasy spots from a hat, gently rub white talcum powder or cornstarch into it.

Hat bands of one inch or smaller are most attractive when they are a color which matches or compliments the hat. A dash of color may be added with pheasant feathers, tie tacks of pearl, turquoise or silver, or other handsome ornaments.

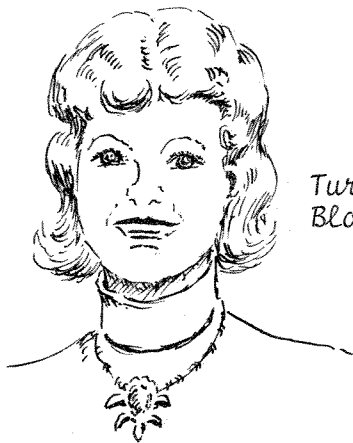
A good plan to follow when you ride is to first get the horse clean and ready to ride. You can use "grubbie" clothing to do this. Then dress in clean clothes, suitable for show, trail riding or pleasure. Put on your hat and leave it. This helps avoid finger spots on light colored hats.

Remember the hat, pants and boots look well together when similar in color. Here are some coordinating combinations.

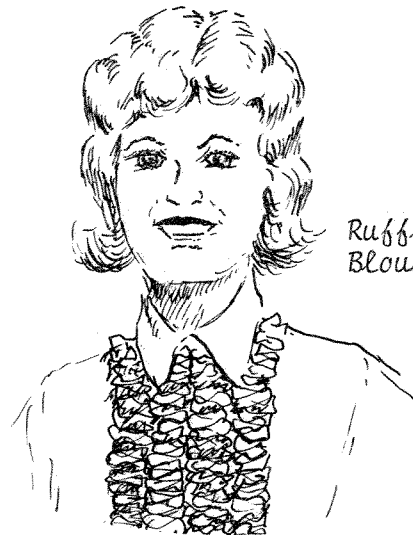


## SHIRTS

Long sleeved shirts or blouses are best for protection, beauty and overall attractiveness. The belled sleeve for ladies adds ease and style in riding. The tailored western shirt is fitted and sports pearl buttons or grippers. Knit turtleneck blouses are handsome and provide ease and wash-and-wear characteristics. Ruffles down the front of a blouse are feminine and may fit just inside a vest for added attractiveness.



Turtleneck  
Blouse



Ruffled  
Blouse

## VESTS AND SWEATERS

A simple, front-buttoned vest made with self lining can provide a focal point of color to the riding attire. Prints and stripes are suitable and often provide a color which may be repeated in gloves or hat.

Sweaters, with or without sleeves, provide warmth, comfort, ease and the casual look for both men and women.



## THE PLACE FOR BLUE JEANS

Blue jeans (more commonly called levis) have been the standards for western wear for years, although they were regarded as workman's clothes by the old-time cowboy. They were usually large enough to wear over a pair of good quality saddle pants when working in the corral.

As the years passed they assumed popularity as the pants cowboys wear. Great care was exercised in selecting waist and leg lengths for a neat-fitting appearance. This fit became the tight-hipped, lean-legged, broad-shouldered appearance associated with the cowboy or western horseman.

Jeans today have assumed many colors, shapes, and styles. Not all enhance the look of the horseman. The show ring has discriminated against blue jeans except for the working competitor in performance events. In these classes, however, it is possible to see blue jeans worn with the fit and shaping from use that portrays the western look. They are usually worn with plain, solid-colored shirts and simple jackets or sweaters.

Here again, the selection of size and styles and the way the jeans are worn determine the authenticity of the western appearance. When worn, blue jeans should be clean and pressed. They should appear at an in-between stage from the brand new stiff appearance to the heavily faded worn stage. The bottom of the legs should fit snugly over the arch of the boot the same as regular dress pants. The waist is worn about two inches below the normal belt line so in effect the

jeans rest over the hip bones. A belt should be worn for the show ring although for safety belts were normally not worn when working.

Jeans may be purchased in slim and regular styles with regular, slim, or flared legs. Buy the style that compliments the leaner look, and avoid the baggy, widely-flared styles available for popular leisure wear. A horseman avoids flapping, loose-fitting clothes.

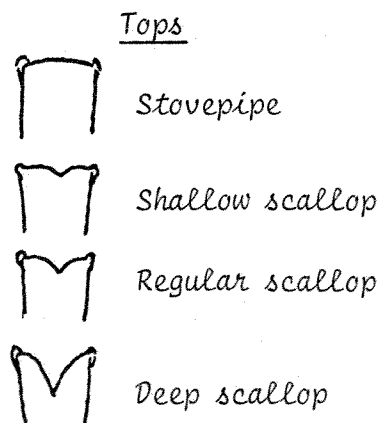
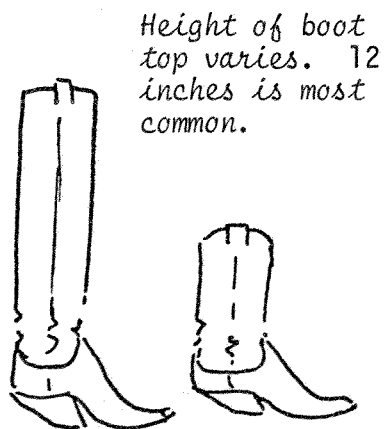
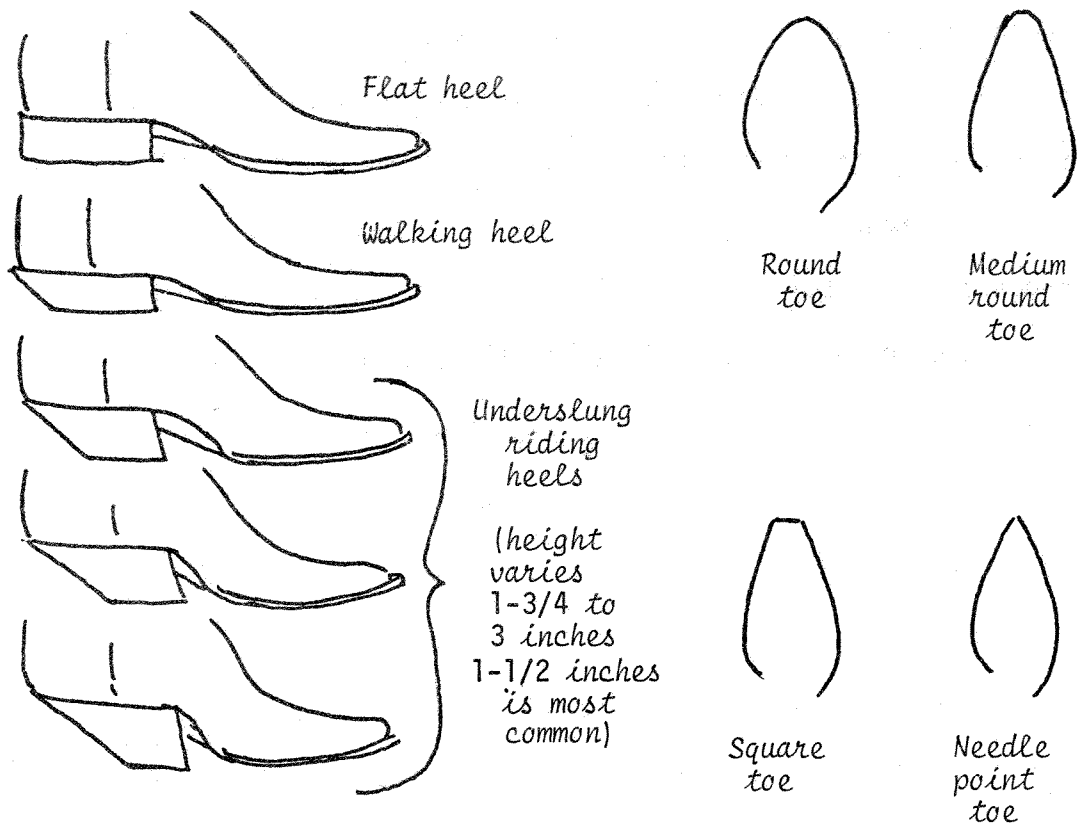
## BOOTS

Western (cowboy or cowgirl) boots should be the best you can afford. The style and color may be personal preference. Good fit is essential. The boots should fit well across the arch. They should be made of good leather or patent leather. The toe should have a western curve and is often protected by a wing tip which is a reinforcement as well as a decorative feature.

Boot heels may vary in height and style. The low flat heel has a tendency to make the foot appear wider and bigger. The under slung riding heel is slightly higher and gives a narrower and smaller appearance.

Boots should match or coordinate well with the hat. For example, blue patent leather boots may be worn with a blue hat. The inspiration blue may come from the blue flowers of a printed black blouse. That same blue may appear as accent color in turquoise beads

worn at the neck. A black hat could also be worn with this ensemble because of the black background of the blouse. However, the black hat may show more dust and thus require more cleaning.



## JEWELRY

Jewelry should be limited in amount, weight and movement. Earrings may be worn and can provide accent color needed with the costume. They should be small, simple and not dangling while riding. For observing or judging shows dangling earrings may be used. The amount of jewelry should be limited to earrings and a simple short strand of beads at the neck. Turquoise and silver go well with black or brown. Elegant brooches may be worn at the collar. Shiny jewelry should be restricted to evening wear. Sometimes brilliant jewelry may be worn on a Queen's costume.

## BELTS

Loops on pants require the use of a belt. Belts should coordinate with the hat and boots and could be the same color as the pants. Tooled leather, stamped leather and Indian beading leather make handsome belts. Belt buckles should be functional. Good taste is recognized in ones which are colorful and proportionate size. Avoid the bulky appearance at the waistline.

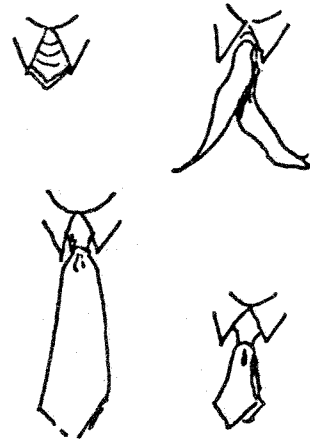
## GLOVES

Gloves provide protection for the hands, afford a more secure grip on the reins and tend to complete the wardrobe whether for work

or dress. Gloves should fit the hands snugly. They may be black, brown or another color of leather to accent the costume with the hat and boots.

### TIES

A small, short, ribbon or pre-formed tie may be used at the collar neckline. The tie can provide an accent color. It may also express formality or informality. The ascot tie is often seen in trail riding but is actually a carry over from the English style of dressing and riding.



### FIT

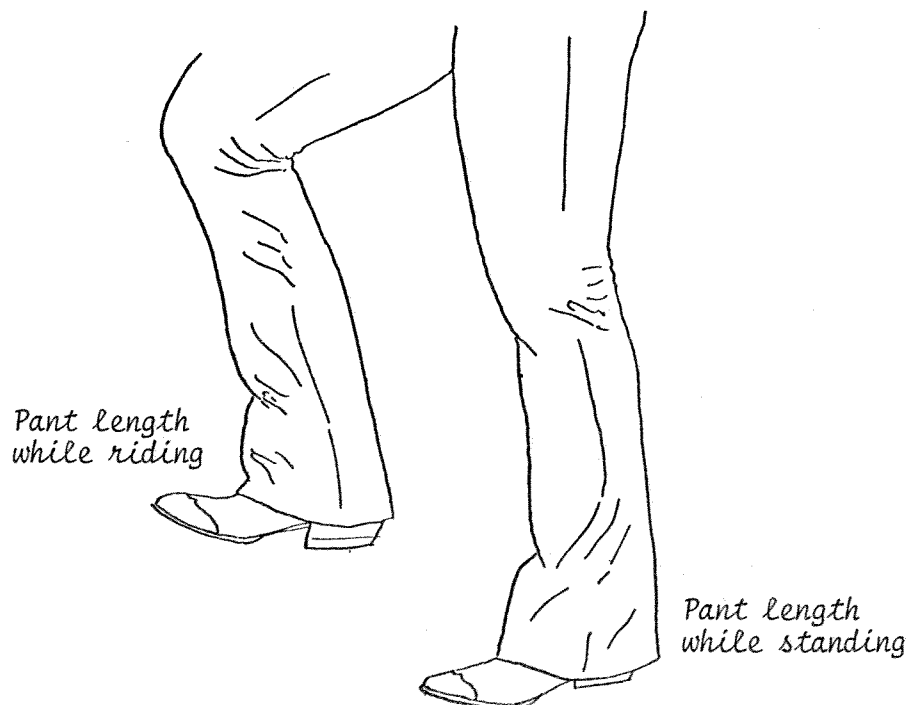
Fit of the total garment is what distinguishes the western wear from other costuming. It is snug and form fitting without being extremely tight.

Sturdy double knit fabric in pants are form fitting, easy to ride in and is washable. The pants should fit snugly in the thigh down to the knees and still allow for bending. The leg may be straight or flare-legged. Flared legs are popular but the flare should never be so large it appears loose and sloppy. Adjust the flare size to compliment the size of the foot. The length of pant should cover the arch, resting at the top of the ball with a slight break in the front crease.

The back of the pants may be slightly longer to lie about one inch above the base of the heel. It is necessary for the pants to be slightly longer when standing than when riding to avoid the appearance of being too short when the rider is seated in the saddle. Woven fabrics are ideal for wearing to banquets, for showmanship or as a queen candidate. They sometimes do not stand the wear and tear as well in the show ring.

Coats should fit the form at the waist but should not be allowed to bunch up. The longer coat is more feminine. Pleats in back shoulder add ease for comfort and riding. The length of the coat sleeve should be no more than one inch below the wrist as the arm hangs straight.

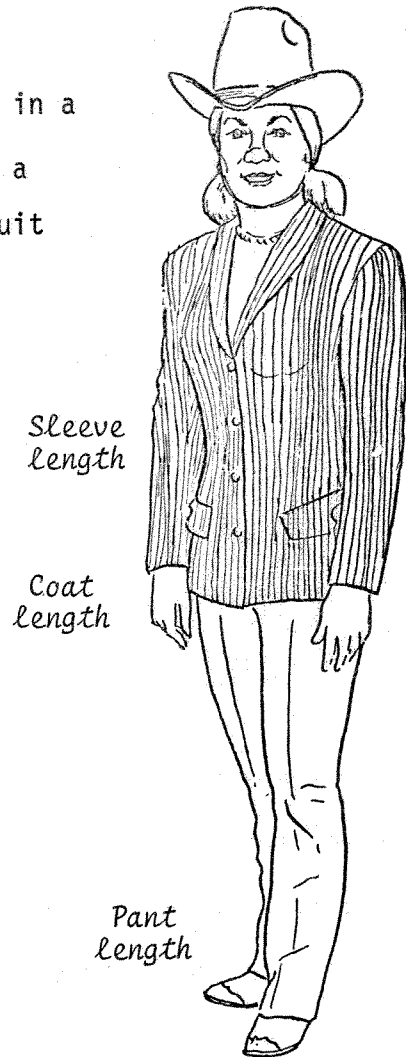
Vests, fitted snugly to the bodice and waist, can add color and a neat appearance to the rider. Seasonal colors and designs can express variation and help expand the wardrobe of western wear. Longer vests tend to flatter the larger hips.



## STYLE

The style for western wear can be expressed as formal, semi-formal and informal.

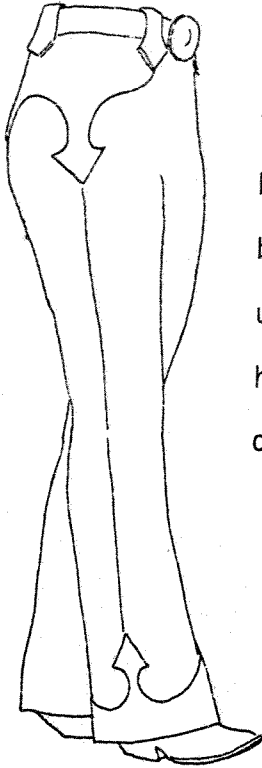
Formal = The full suit of coat and pants in a solid color or all one design. Dark pants with a coordinating coat may also be formal. A dark suit with white hat, white gloves and white boots is formal.



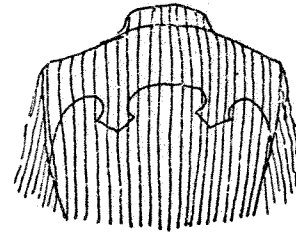
Semi-formal = vest, blouse, and pants. These are still dressy but more comfortable.

Informal = jumpsuits, jean-type pants, hat and boots of the same color and accented with variety in gloves, boots, hats, ties and beads. Sweaters are casual.

## YOKES



Another factor which distinguishes western wear from other costuming is the use of yokes. Yokes may be designed and cut into many shapes for the front and back of shirts at the shoulders and for pants at the upper hips, at the side, across the back above full hips and at the leg from calf to ankle. The shaping of the yoke can have an influence on figure size.



Wherever yokes are used it is good design to have stripes, plaids and obvious prints match. Care must be taken to place patterns on fabric correctly to enable these to match. Ready-to-wear garments should have matching yokes. Otherwise leave them at the store.

Vents in the back of coats may be either at center or two equally spaced from center back. The vent allows the coat to drape easily onto the saddle.



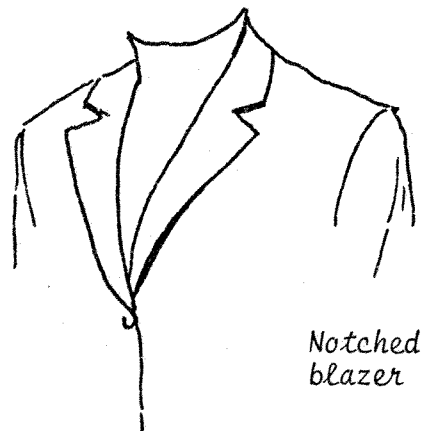
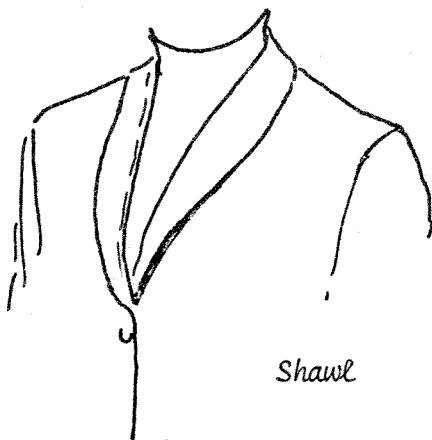
## POCKETS

Ready-to-wear coats may have small pockets. Avoid filling them full and distorting the fitted appearance of the garment.

When sewing your own coat, pockets may be eliminated and thus save time and bulkiness. However, construct and attach a pocket flap which completes the design of the coat.

## COLLARS

The shawl collar as well as the blazer notched collar make beautiful front openings with the neat, simple appearance desired in western wear.



## PATTERNS

If you choose to sew western wear, today there are a number of companies which produce patterns specifically for this or with the western influence in designing. Some of the are:

Authentic Western Wear	Kwik-Sew
Butterick	Lola Gentry
Gene Hardy	Simplicity

## FABRICS

Selecting fabrics in ready-to-wear as well as for home sewing of western wear should be done with care. Tightly woven or knitted fabrics wear better and maintain a good look longer. The hard finish of fabric to resist soil is important.

Suitable fabrics for pants are knits made of wool, wool blends, polyester and polyester blends. Wovens made of cotton, wool or blends of these with manmade and synthetic fibers provide a sturdy fabric for long wear especially in corduroy pile or twill weaves.

Shirts and blouses may be of cotton or cotton/polyester blend. These wash well and while wearing help to absorb body moisture.

Tapestry and drapery weight fabrics often are suitable for vests. They provide pretty designs, sturdy texture and sufficient fabric weight for this garment.

It is wise to avoid using slippery, shiny, satin textures in western wear. They do not stay fitted very long and become mussed and wrinkled easily. They also hinder obtaining a secure seat in the saddle.

## HOSIERY

Boot socks may provide the comfort you want. Nylon knee length hose are also suitable. For cold weather, long underwear may be necessary.

## UNDERGARMENTS

Stretchable knits in underpants are very comfortable and for fitting. Bikinis should be avoided. Whatever type undergarment is worn, including bras, the fit should be comfortable. If there is an outline of the undergarment showing, it is too tight.

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