

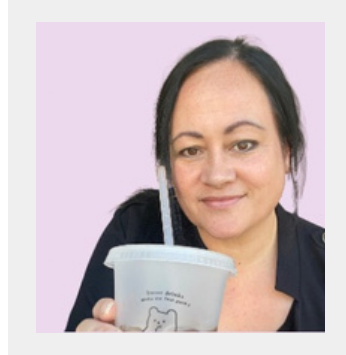


Styling Curves Guide

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Hello!

I'm Rachelle



I'm Rachelle, personal stylist and founder of Key Black NZ. The Style Studio is your go to place for fashion, confidence, and simple wardrobe systems + style tools that help women rediscover their style, find confidence, and say goodbye to wardrobe overwhelm!

Here's your guide to confident styling: Packed with 20 style tips I share in personal styling sessions, the Styling Curves Guide makes getting dressed easier and boosts your style confidence.

Arohanui
Your stylist,

Rachelle Varnham



The Styling Curves Guide

This guide covers common body and styling challenges I hear during personal stylings. I've added some quick tips to help you master them and feel confident in your outfits. Start by trying one tip at a time and see how it changes the way you feel in your clothes.

Styling curves is part of what we cover in the **Style Me Confident E-Course** where you can learn more about The Connection Between Fashion and Confidence. Explore how fashion and confidence work together to help you feel amazing in your style and your curves!

The Style Studio — the key to confident style.

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I. Finding your size in plus size brands

Your size will vary depending where you shop and even in the same store you may vary across labels. The reason why is because we all have different grades for sizing.

Tips to get it right

✦ NZ made here brands are usually true to NZ sizing. Other countries are likely true to their standard sizing too. I have found off shore plus size brands often have a smaller grade.

✦ Go by measurements if they're listed, or follow the recommended size on the store website.

✦ At @key_black we include the recommended size in brackets next to each style. Some items run big or small, so check this!

✦ Check social media & online stores for model size references. This visual can help determine what size you'll be.

✦ Reviews are a great clue if a brand tends to run big or small.

There is no one answer for sizing between stores. The good news: I've found once I know my size in a label I run with this size for other styles, same label and so far success!





2 Fabrics that move with curves

✨ 100% Viscose (man made, mimics natural due to wood pulp content) My fave in summer!

✨ Cotton & Modal with a bit of weight behind the fabric to avoid cling. I prefer cotton with a bit of spandex

✨ Linen (if you don't mind crinkles) - loose fit is best with linen & curves

✨ Denim with stretch

✨ Viscose/spandex: Moves with curves and lasts soooo long

✨ Yes to Polyester / chiffon. I wear for outer layers or sleeveless. Also ok if oversized (to let air in!)

✨ Rayon yes (a bit like viscose)

✨ Silk (yes because it breathes but be aware of the tight seams & curves = split)

✨ Ponte yes normally has a rayon blend

P.S I avoid

The thin shiny Polly - this causes static & makes outer layers stick. I also avoid synthetic next to the skin because I get hot - but love chiffon for layers.



3 Plus size fit compared to non plus size

(Most) Designers who specialise in plus size consider curves when creating their size blocks. When we done our KB sizes my grading lady told me I had it wrong because we allowed extra space for curvy bits but we had it right for the curves!

I love that more stores are adding more sizes to their ranges but sometimes (not always) they have been taken from a style that is designed for a non curve figure.

Understanding how plus sizes are designed helps you shop confidently and avoid the bad fit pieces.





4 What should I avoid wearing as a plus size woman?



✦ Nothing... your style your body your choice

✦ Fashion is individual style

✦ Dress for comfort

With comfort comes confidence

Comfort = Non restrictive + fabric that moves with you & shape you're comfortable showing!



5 Styling layering pieces

Layering works best when you create balance and movement.
Start simple and build up.

1. Start with fitted basics (tees, tanks, bodysuits)

Length of basic depends on style of pant, legging, + comfort level.

2. Add lightweight, layers (top, tunic, cardigans, jackets)

KEY: Mix short + long pieces for balance

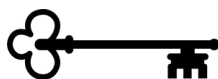
✓ Avoid finish lengths on the curvy bits. Go above or below

✓ Belts are great to define your waist
(A open jacket + belt works well when curvy)

✓ Choose fabrics
that move, not add bulk

✓ Layer for shape and
proportion, not to hide.

✓ Highlight shape: Vertical lines + angles can help to cut up
the curves





6 Styling for the Apple body shape



Apple shapes don't dress to hide. They dress for flow and balance.

- ✨ Create vertical lines. Open layers & angles are great
- ✨ Soft fabrics with flow through the midsection
- ✨ Shape higher up - Empire lines / gentle A line
- ✨ Balance with straight or wide leg pants
- ✨ Highlight strengths. Neckline legs arms
- ✨ High waist pleated pant when wearing shorter tops. Avoid finishing mid tummy, this can cause a 2nd tummy!

✓ Shape + Flow = Balance

✓ Focus on highlighting the strengths.

✓ Shape up top | Flow through the middle | Shape down low





7 Choosing clothing that flatters your shape



Understand your dominant shape zone

Choose what fits your largest measurement comfortably.

1. Bust / tummy
2. Hips / thighs
3. Shoulders / chest

Dominant zone 📌

Darker shades

The slim bits 📌

Light to bright shades

Comfort: Pants that finish over the tummy, avoid pants that finish on & create an extra tummy

Small up top 📌

Set in sleeve | Colour + Print | Darker shades

Comfort 1st always 📌

Soft fabrics that move with curves

Go slim fit bases 📌

When you wear flowy + oversized

Curvy hip 📌

Wide - flare pant for balance | Shape at waist

Wide shoulder 📌

Shape in middle to wide | flare for balance

Curvy bust 📌

Set in sleeve

Understanding shape zones makes it easier to mix style and comfort while flattering curves.





8 Best plus size wardrobe essentials

A strong foundation makes styling easier. The basics are the glue to the wardrobe and tie everything together. This combo of basics is how to create a mix & match wardrobe with so many styling options.

- ✦ Base cami long
- ✦ Base cami short
- ✦ Sleeve base long
- ✦ Sleeve base short
- ✦ Merino base
- ✦ Wide leg or straight leg pant
- ✦ Slim line pant or skirt
- ✦ Base legging or tights
- ✦ 3/4 to 7/8 pant or legging

Combine these with a few tops tunics dresses and over pieces mix and match for the ultimate everyday wardrobe.





9 Wearing structured pieces that flatter curves

Structured pieces can add shape without adding bulk.

- ✦ Choose jackets and blazers that have room for layers to prevent that restrictive feeling
- ✦ Make sure they don't pull on upper arm.
- ✦ Look for open fronts or single button closures. Curves suit open styles & styles that draw you in at the waist
- ✦ Soft structured fabrics for comfort
- ✦ Finish length for jackets, go above the curves or below the curves. Crop styles that finish at waist + Mid styles that go past the bottom. (Avoid finishing on the curvy bits)
- ✦ Pair with slim or wide leg bottoms depending on your dominant zone. I love a blazer with a pair of jeans & a tee.
- ✦ When wearing dresses - blazers to the waist or close to the length of the dress. Avoid finishing half way down dress this can cut you off

Structured pieces create shape and confidence. Focus on fit on arms and at the waist.

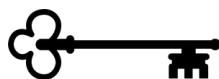


10 Finding outfit inspiration that reflects your style

Seeing outfits that suit your body helps you translate ideas into your wardrobe.

- ✦ Follow brands and stylists that show your body shape
- ✦ Save images of outfits that feel like "you"
- ✦ Mix inspiration with your basics and over pieces
- ✦ Try new combinations with what you already own
- ✦ Look at Instagram and Pinterest for styling ideas with similar shapes woman.
- ✦ I have clients that have a style folder on their phone. Take photos of looks from your wardrobe once you've styled them. On the "what to wear days" get inspo from this

Use as inspiration and have a play with what you have in the wardrobe.





II Styling Plus Size Dresses

Dresses are versatile and flattering when you focus on shape in the right places. The right cuts enhance curves without cling on the curvy bits!



- ✦ Choose dresses that skim your curves, not cling
- ✦ Wraps, A-lines, and empire lines flatter the curvy middle girls
- ✦ Layer with jackets, cardigans, or belts to add shape.
- ✦ Jackets also bring back that comfort level for me, they give that long slim line but can also show shape.
- ✦ Choose fabrics that move with your body, this avoids the restricted feeling
- ✦ Accessorise to bring out colours in the dress or to add colour to a black dress
- ✦ I love the dress sneaker look with dresses too!

Dresses should feel like you - confident, comfortable, and effortless. Layering and fabric choices let your curves shine without compromise.





12 Styling the Plus Size Pear Body Shape



Pear shapes carry more weight in the hips and thighs.

✦ Highlight your upper body. Neckline, shoulders, and sleeves draw the eye up

✦ A-line and flared skirts create balance below

✦ Soft fabrics with movement prevent cling on the lower body

✦ Darker bottoms and light to bright tops

✦ Belts define the waist and create a flattering line

✦ A wide - flare can balance this shape

✦ Vertical lines, open jackets & angled tops can draw the eye away from the curvy bits.

Focus on shaping above and balancing below.





13 Mixing and matching outfits for different occasions

Knowing how to combine basics makes getting dressed for any occasion easier.



✦ Shoes & blazers can dress up your day looks for the office

✦ Invest in tops that are comfy enough for the weekend but throw on some boots or heels + a jacket or blazer and you're ready for the next occasion

✦ Choose tops and tunics that you can pair with jeans or a dressy pant

✦ Dress down dresses with a sneaker, scarf or denim jacket

✦ Add accessories to shift casual to dressy

✦ Add a office jacket over a casual tee, jeans & sneakers for a weekend catch up with the girls

✦ Shop for your lifestyle & avoid adding "event styles" that you can't dress down for other occasions

✦ Basics are key: A longer slip base can be worn with tops, tunics, under dresses and under jackets, blazers, cardis.

Mixing and matching keeps your wardrobe versatile and functional.





14 Everyday outfit ideas for plus size women



A go to formula makes mornings easier. Start here - outfit ideas next page...

✨ Start by checking in on your base styles from page 8. This will allow your outfits to flow.

(Tanks, sleeved bases, pants, jeans - a mix of short & long)

✨ Middle pieces: You don't need many of the middle pieces to get easy outfit ideas

Short tops or tees, with sleeves + sleeveless

Longer tops or tunics with sleeves + sleeveless

Dresses

✨ Over pieces: You also don't need many over pieces just the right combo of styles & lengths.

You need a mix of short + long in casual + a bit dressier.





14 Everyday outfit ideas for plus size women (part 2)



✦ Jeans | Casual tee | Blazer | Sneaker

✦ Lounge pant | Angled top or tee | Flats or sneaker

✦ Slim fit long base (to your length comfort) | Any angled tee or tunic | Short to long jacket | sneaker to casual shoe

✦ Long slip base | Crop, mid or long jacket or cardigan | Sneaker to casual shoe or boot

✦ Skinny - straight leg pant | Short top or tunic | Crop jacket | Sneaker or boot

✦ Dresses or tunics | Style with crop, mid or long jacket (3 looks for each dress + tunic) | Funky sneaker or sandal

✦ Legging + longer base | Any top, tunic | Mid to long jacket blazer or cardigan | White sneaker or casual boot

✦ The suggested sleeved basics can go under all your sleeveless tops, tunic & dresses to make your wardrobe work all year round

➡ See style inspo for plus size on our social pages





15 Necklines that flatter plus size figures



The right neckline highlights strengths and draws attention strategically. Necklines guide the eye and frame your upper body .
(Guide only)

✨ V-neck elongates the neck

Best suited for:

Apple

Busty figures

Inverted triangle

Fuller midsection

Shorter neck

✨ Round Neckline, softens the neckline

Best suited for:

Pear

Rectangle

Smaller bust

Longer neck

✨ High Neckline, shortens neckline

Best suited for:

Pear

Hourglass

Rectangle

Long neck

Smaller to medium bust





16 Dressing plus size hourglass shapes

Hourglass shapes are all about balance and definition.



- ✦ Define waist with belt or fitted piece
- ✦ Soft fabrics with flow over hips and bust
- ✦ Wraps and fitted tops highlight curves
- ✦ Straight or slight flare pants balance proportion
- ✦ Structured jackets open or single button

Hourglass shapes shine when you highlight curves and create balance - Shape up to - Flow through middle - Balance in the pant - Wide to flare

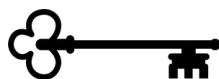


17 Wearing bold colours and prints confidently

Colour and prints can be a styling tools.

- ✦ Bright colours on parts you want to highlight
- ✦ Prints medium - large suit curves
- ✦ Solid basics to anchor bold pieces
- ✦ Accessories in neutral, matching or mis matching shades.
- ✦ Prints - use accessories to draw out a colour from your print, this gives you a polished ""I know what I'm doing look
- ✦ Shoes are perfect to tie looks together - black top - blue jeans - black boots
- ✦ If you're new to colour & prints... start small with a bright base or a print base then layer with something in your wardrobe.
- ✦ If you're just starting out try an all black look & a coloured blazer. Baby steps to confidence!
- ✦ If you're not used to prints & colour try wearing something coloured or printed each day until it becomes your new norm!

Use bold choices to express style and complement your shape.



18 Accessorising outfits

Accessories transform outfits without major investment.

✦ Belts define waist

✦ Scarves add texture and are a great styling tool. Match with your outfit, accessories or shoes.

✦ Long scarves that go past the curves when wrapped are best. Ones that sit on the bust or mid section can draw attention to the curvy bits

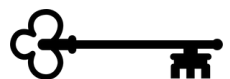
✦ Jewellery can also be used to draw the eye away from curves. (bold statement pieces are good for curves too)

✦ Try layering more delicate jewellery.

✦ Bags are perfect to tie a look together, pull out a colour from your outfit.

✦ Shoes, go matching to one shade lighter or darker for a polished look. (For an edgy finish play around with the mismatch shoe - Ex. Pink dress, orange shoe)

Smart accessories complete your look and add personal flair.



19 Building a capsule wardrobe

Fewer pieces better combos. Focus on mix and match.

✦ Basics first.

✦ Middle pieces that include one or two statement pieces

✦ Layering pieces – a mix of short, long, sleeves & sleeveless

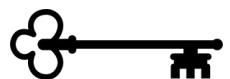
✦ Over pieces – a mix of short, mid, long jackets, blazers & cardis. From casual to work or pieces that will take you from weekend to wine.

✦ Shoes and accessories for finishing

✦ The idea of a concept wardrobe is to have the right mix of basics, middle, over that all mix and match so you work with minimal pieces with endless styling options that will take you anywhere.

A capsule wardrobe makes styling simpler and your everyday wardrobe stronger.

See our checklists on the next page.



19 Building the ultimate everyday wardrobe: The checklist

Basics checklist

Base cami long
Base cami short
Sleeve base long
Sleeve base short
Sleeve base merino
Wide leg or straight pant or skirt
Slim line pant or skirt
Base leggings or tights
3/4 or 7/8 pant and or legging

Middle checklist

Short top sleeveless
Short top with sleeves
Long top or tunic sleeveless
Long top or tunic sleeveless
Dress sleeveless
Dress with sleeves
Jumper or casual hoody

Over checklist

Casual
Work
Winter
Short
Long
Dress up

Finishing touches

Dress sneaker
Ankle boot + above ankle boot
Sandal + flat
Heal or dress shoe
Bold necklace + Earring
Subtle necklace + earring
Scarves
Gloves + hats



20 Style tips for curvy confidence

1. Invest in a great fitting base layer, it sets the tone for every outfit.
2. Play with proportions, tuck, knot, or belt to define your waist.
3. Comfort doesn't mean baggy, soft fabrics can still be structured and flattering.
4. Mix textures to add dimension without adding bulk.
5. Highlight what you love, necklines, shoulders, legs, don't hide everything.
6. A statement accessory can elevate even the simplest outfit.
7. Tailoring is your secret weapon, invest in alterations where it counts.
8. Dark shades aren't the only slimming option, colour placement and contrast work wonders.
9. Layer strategically, longline jackets, cardigans, and vests create shape.
10. Belts aren't just functional, they instantly add polish and confidence.



20 Style tips for curvy confidence (part 2)

11. Know your fabrics, stretch, drape, and movement matter on curves.
12. Patterns can be your friend, vertical lines, small prints, and colour blocking all flatter.
13. Shoes matter, pointed, nude, or block heels elongate without hurting your feet.
14. Necklines frame your face, v-necks, scoop, or square shapes can make a huge difference.
15. Confidence is your best fit, stand tall, shoulders back, own your look.
16. Play with lengths, cropped tops, midi skirts, or layers that hit at the right spot.
17. Mix casual with elevated pieces, it makes outfits feel intentional, not thrown together.
18. Fitted doesn't mean tight, hug the right areas and let others flow.
19. Rotate your signature pieces, key wardrobe staples that you feel amazing in every time.
20. Experiment, try a new colour, print, or style even if it scares you a little.

STYLE STUDIO

Thanks for checking in on your style with Key Black!

The Style Studio is your go to place for curvy styling tools and wardrobe systems, from quick style fixes to full wardrobe transformations. You'll find more resources @ The Style Studio keystylestudio.com

