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<https://www.wsj.com/style/fashion/stylish-workwear-for-women-problems-solved-ffd53d98>

## FASHION

# The 5 Most Annoying Workwear Problems for Women, Solved

Dressing for the office is frustrating at best and defeating at worst—but it doesn't have to be. Here, expert hacks for finding comfortable, functional, fabulous-looking clothes for work.

*By Marisa Meltzer*

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**SAY YES TO NO STRESS** Not everyone has access to designer work duds like Anne Hathaway in ‘The Devil Wears Prada,’ seen here in a swanky Chanel blazer. But a few easy hacks will make assembling the perfect office look a breeze. PHOTO: EVERETT COLLECTION

**FOR MOST** women in traditional offices, assembling a workplace wardrobe is excruciating—and not for reasons you might expect. While the post-WFH era ushered in the “How casual is [too casual](#)?” guessing game, the most pressing workwear problems predate Covid 19.

These age-old issues are decidedly unsexy conundrums—How do I stop sweating through my blouse? Do wrinkle-resistant blazers exist?—that few women openly discuss and even fewer brands adequately address.



**BLUNDER MIFFLIN** It's easier than you think to avoid frumpy, ill-fitting work outfits like the ones Jenna Fischer wore as Pam on 'The Office.' PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Fit is an especially irksome issue for women of all shapes and sizes. Although fashion is becoming more size-inclusive—H&M U.S. recently extended its women's sizing to 4X—most brands don't account for the fact that no two bodies are identical shapes, even if they're both technically a size 10. Fit is a game, said Betty Halbreich, the founder of Bergdorf Goodman's Solutions personal-shopping department. "You have to try on every

designer, every piece.”

It’s easy to preach body positivity, but even the most confident among us would feel defeated if each button-down she tried gaped awkwardly at the bust or every blazer she found had oppressively snug sleeves. Just ask Karen Ortiz, an administrative judge in Manhattan. “I had a couple of comments from colleagues like, ‘Oh that looks tight on you,’” said Ms. Ortiz, 51. That’s when she hired a pro to help her shop.

Having a [personal stylist](#) on call isn’t the only fix. Here, experts and working women solve five vexing office-wear headaches.

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**1. My work pants violently dig into my waist. Does anyone make polished trousers that won’t cause me physical pain by 11 a.m.?**

From top: High-Waist Pant, \$345, Vince.com; Stretch Pant, \$99, Athleta.com

Vince's classic High-Waist Bias Pant has a subtle elastic waistband that affords sweats-level ease, said Mary Orton, a blogger in Milwaukee who doles out advice on office style via her website Memorandum. Also worth considering: Athleta's secretly stretchy Brooklyn Ankle Pant.

Vince creative director Caroline Belhumeur advocates broadening your definition of "polished" and pairing easy wool cargo pants with an oversize blazer. "I went out in mine and didn't have a bag!" she said.

## **2. I have a sweaty commute to a freezing office. WFH in PJs sans bra was so much better. How can I stay comfortable all day?**

From top: Undershirt, \$65, WearNumi.com; Full Brief, \$20, Skims.com

At her office in scorching Phoenix, Amy L. Johnson, 45, is blasted with A.C. But she finds carrying a cardigan to her job in a tech department “annoying.” Brooklyn stylist Karyn Starr advises those in similar situations layer under, not over, their clothes. Numi’s Tencel-blend undershirt has underarm gussets that absorb sweat before it shows. “They’re game-changers,” said Ms. Starr.

For actual underwear, Washington, D.C., stylist Lauren A. Rothman suggests replicating WFH comfort with wireless bras and seamless briefs—the latter of which will help you avoid panty lines and thongs.

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**3. I am not a sneaker person but I refuse to abuse my feet with heels. What are some comfy-but-chic shoes?**

From top: Hereu Loafers, \$555, Farfetch.com; Loafers, \$1,200, Prada.com

Ballet flats are for-sure chic but high-end options can cost four figures and the style doesn't

offer a lot of support. “I love the idea of an oxford shoe for women because it sends a subtle nod to old-school men’s dress,” said New York City stylist Joanna Lovering, who sends clients to Cole Haan. Want some height without the toe-pinching pitch? “Platforms are a problem solver,” said Ms. Rothman. Her preferred purveyors are Stella McCartney and Clergerie. [Prada](#) also offers a menagerie of platform styles that work equally well with tux pants and jeans.

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#### **4. Why do all button-down shirts gap at my bust, and how do I make it stop?**

From top: Stretch Poplin Shirt, \$114, UniversalStandard.com; Cotton Shirt, \$350, Toteme-Studio.com

“Let’s be real,” said Ms. Lovering. “The old secure-it-with-a-safety-pin trick is overused. And we can always see the pin.” She points her clients to Universal Standard, whose Elbe Popover Stretch Poplin Shirt dispatches the button bulge via its half-placket design, generous arm holes and a smidge of elastane. For a more casual look, Ms. Starr, who said that her “clients with breasts tend to almost give up” on shirting, recommends Toteme’s Signature Cotton Shirt. The top’s intentionally oversize cut prevents buttons from misbehaving.

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**5. I love how blazers make almost any outfit office-ready, but why do so many have shrunk arms and wrinkle-prone fabric? Where have all the crisp, adult-size jackets gone?**



From top: Blazer, \$595, RachelComey.com; Blazer, \$495, MMLaFleur.com

According to Ms. Orton, they're on the e-comm sites of M.M. LaFleur and Theory. Both brands sell blazers in versatile knit or stretch fabrics that appear polished even after you've wrangled your toddler into a car seat, she said. New York designer Rachel Comey makes jackets in a cotton-polyamide blend called Foam. Her New Amboy Blazer is cut from this spongy jacquard, the pebbled texture of which helps resist and mask wrinkles. Bonus? Its oversize silhouette allows for maximum movement.

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