

# How Melania Trump's style has evolved, from her modeling days to first lady life

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Melania Trump has been in the public eye since the 1990s.

Her style has evolved as she went from a model and Donald Trump's girlfriend to first lady.

Melania set a new tone for her political style at the 2025 inauguration.

Melania Trump has been a public figure since she first became involved with Donald Trump in the 1990s.

Melania, 54, was working as a model at the time, and her life changed dramatically as she became a high-profile businessman's wife and eventually first lady — as did her style.

Take a look back at Melania's fashion evolution, from her days walking red carpets to her political life.



**Donald and Melania Trump at a party for "Celebrity" in New York in 1998.** Ron Galella/Ron Galella Collection via Getty Images

At a "Celebrity" party in 1998, Melania chose a figure-hugging silk dress in periwinkle. Its neckline scooped gently.







**Melania Trump attends the Annual Fragrance Foundation Fifi Awards in June 1999.**  
Ron Galella/Ron Galella Collection via Getty Images

Melania arrived at the 1999 Annual Fragrance Foundation Fifi Awards in a form-fitting dress covered entirely in pink sparkles.

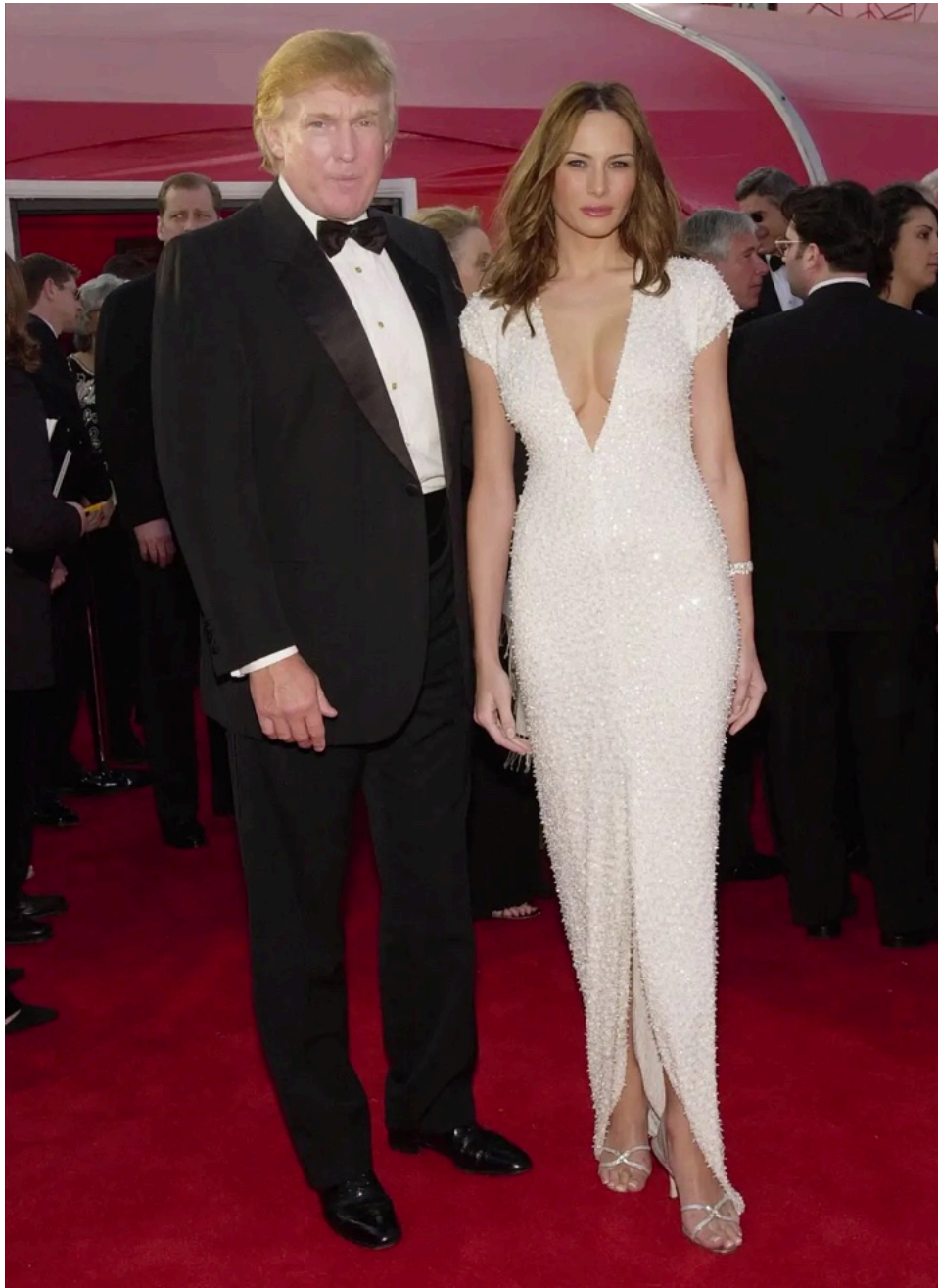
The gown's subtle slit was sexy without being over the top.

Melania also experimented with sheer fabric in the early days of her career, as she did at a film premiere in October 2000.



Melania Trump attends the "Charlie's Angels" premiere in October 2000. Evan Agostini/Getty Images

The daring neckline on her dress for the March 2001 Academy Awards wasn't uncommon for Melania at the time.



**Donald and Melania Trump arrive for the 73rd Annual Academy Awards in March 2001.** Chris Weeks/Getty Images

When she accompanied Donald Trump to the Oscars, Melania wore a form-fitting white dress embellished with sparkly sequins.

The gown had a V-neckline, which mirrored the slit running up the center of the dress.



In September 2002, Melania showed off a more laid-back style during New York Fashion Week.



**Melania Trump attends a fashion show in New York City in September 2002.** Evan Agostini/ImageDirect/Getty Images



The gown she wore to the Angel Ball in October 2003 featured a strapless neckline.



**Melania Trump attends the Angel Ball in October 2003.** Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage for G/P Foundation/Getty Images

A full skirt accented the gown's form-fitting bodice.

The black-and-tan dress featured a feathered skirt with sheer detailing, and she paired it with coordinating shoes.

The night she got engaged, Melania wore a semi-sheer dress to the Met Gala.



**Donald and Melania Trump attend the 2004 Met Gala.** Steve Eichner/WWD/Penske Media via Getty Images

A few months after she got engaged, Melania showed off her casual style once again.



**Melania Trump at the Olympus Fashion Week in September 2004.** Lawrence Lucier/FilmMagic/Getty Images

Attending a Fashion Week event, Melania paired fitted jeans with a sheer pink babydoll top. High heels completed the look.



Melania still leaned into daring looks when she was pregnant in October 2005.



**Melania Trump attends the Night of Stars event in October 2005.** Evan Agostini/Getty Images



Melania attended the Night of Stars party in October 2005 when she was expecting Barron Trump.

She wore an empire-waist black gown to the event, which featured sheer fabric on the neckline and sparkly embellishments.

See-through fabric and lace continued to be staples for Melania in September 2006.



**Melania Trump attends the Metropolitan Opera Opening Night Dinner in September 2006.** Patrick McMullan/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

Black dresses with sheer detailing became a bit of a uniform for Melania in the early 2000s, as she showed with her dress for the Metropolitan Opera Opening Night Dinner in 2006.

The silk dress had lace detailing on the sheer bodice and the neckline. Crisscross straps and lace paneling on the skirt added to the sexy gown.

She still looked every bit the model at the 2007 Met Gala.



**Melania Trump attends the 2007 Met Gala.** Peter Kramer/Getty Images



In February 2007, Melania showed off a chicer side of her style at a Fashion Week event.



**Donald and Melania Trump attend a Fashion Week event in February 2007.** Katy Winn/Getty Images for IMG

Melania was photographed attending a Fashion Week event in 2007 alongside Donald Trump.

She wore all-black, and her hat and wrap featured fuzzy detailing. Knee-high boots completed the wintry ensemble.

Her dress for the 2008 Met Gala was hot pink.



**Melania Trump attends the 2008 Met Gala.** Dimitrios Kambouris/WireImage/Getty Images

Melania kept up her streak of eye-catching Met Gala looks in 2008, arriving in a strapless Vera Wang dress that was bright pink.

The dress had a bow on the neckline and ruffle detailing on its mermaid skirt.

Melania seemed to still be a fan of sparkles in December 2009.



Melania Trump attends the premiere of "Nine" in December 2009. Jim Spellman/WireImage/Getty Images



Melania's style was simple but chic at a November 2010 event.



**Melania Trump attends the Moves Magazine Power Women awards dinner and ceremony in November 2010.** Henry S. Dziekan III/Getty Images

Melania's black cocktail dress had a form-fitting bodice with a subtle sweetheart neckline and spaghetti straps. The dress hit her knees, and she paired it with open-toe shoes.



But when she appeared at a SiriusXM event in September 2011, Melania showed off a more professional side of her style.



Melania Trump at SiriusXM in September 2011. Taylor Hill/Getty Images

Melania's black suit was simple, featuring flared pants and a fitted jacket. The top buttons of her white blouse were open, and the sleeves poked out from under the jacket.

Black, pointed heels complemented the ensemble.

Melania donned a more modest dress for an August 2012 appearance on "Good Afternoon America."



**Melania Trump arrives at a taping of "Good Afternoon America" in August 2012.**  
Ray Tamarra/Getty Images

Melania's gray dress for her "Good Afternoon America" appearance had a professional feel.

The fitted dress had a V-neckline and covered her knees, and a black belt cinched her waist. She also wore black heels.

**She wore an all-white look to a golf event at Mar-a-Lago in January 2013.**



**Melania Trump, Barron Trump, and Donald Trump attend Trump Invitational Grand Prix at Mar-a-Lago in January 2013.** Larry Marano/Getty Images

When Trump hosted an Invitational Grand Prix at Mar-a-Lago in January 2013, Melania showed that she could nail a dress code.

Her white, sleeveless dress had a scooped neckline and a pleated skirt that felt like an elevated version of a golf ensemble. She added white heels to the look.



Melania's outfit for the New York Ball in November 2014 blended her love of sheer with a professional edge.



**Melania Trump attends The New York Ball at Trump Tower in November 2014.**  
Jamie McCarthy/Getty Images

The jumpsuit featured long sleeves, subtly flared pants, and semi-sheer paneling on the bodice adorned with black lace.

Black heels accented the ensemble.

**When she appeared on a Barbara Walters special in 2015, Melania looked every bit the politician's wife.**



**Melania and Donald Trump on "Barbara Walters Presents: The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2015" in November 2015.** Ida Mae Astute/Disney General Entertainment Content via Getty Images

After Trump announced he was running for president in the summer of 2015, he and Melania appeared on "Barbara Walters Presents: The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2015."

Melania chose a simple pink dress with short sleeves and a modest neckline for the interview. Her pink, pointed shoes matched the dress.

Her white dress for the July 2016 Republican National Convention was simple, aside from its playful sleeves.



**Melania Trump at the Republican National Convention in July 2016.** Ida Mae Astute/Disney General Entertainment Content via Getty Images

Lauren A. Rothman, a style strategist and image coach, told Business Insider that Melania seemed to be telling "two narratives" with fashion throughout her life, leaning into glamour and slightly more daring looks when she was first in the public eye.

But after Trump entered politics, Rothman said Melania's looks became more intentional because "she was trying to say something with more storytelling" about her identity and her husband through her fashion, as she showed at the 2016 RNC.

For the RNC, Melania wore the "Margot" dress from Roksanda, which she bought from Net-a-Porter, according to Vanity Fair. The modest white dress had a high neckline, a knee-length hem, and quarter-length sleeves that ended in ruffles.

The dress was simple and elegant, striking a similar tone to first ladies of years past.



**Melania nodded to Jackie Kennedy with her outfit for Trump's inauguration in January 2017.**



**Donald and Melania Trump walk through Washington, DC, on Inauguration Day in January 2017. JIM WATSON/AFP via Getty Images**

Melania attended her husband's inauguration in a powder-blue dress designed by Ralph Lauren Collection. The dress was paired with a matching shrug and gloves.

The silhouette was reminiscent of Jackie Kennedy's outfits during her time as first lady.

"It was so curated," Rothman said of the look. "It was an instant revival of that Jackie memory."

Rothman said the nostalgia in the look lent Melania some of the power Jackie Kennedy held in the American mind, striking the right tone for the beginning of her tenure as first lady.

Ralph Lauren is also a classic American designer, though Melania would go on to wear European designers throughout Trump's presidency.

Her dress for a 2017 inaugural ball was custom-made.



**Donald and Melania Trump at an inaugural ball in January 2017.** Kevin Dietsch - Pool/Getty Images

Melania changed into a gown custom-designed by Hervé Pierre Braillard for his Hervé Pierre line.

The form-fitting, cream dress had off-the-shoulder sleeves made of the same fabric as a three-dimensional swath of fabric that cut across the bodice, creating volume. The same fabric flowed on the skirt, creating a train on one side, and a red belt cinched her waist.

Braillard became Melania's stylist and strategy consultant throughout Trump's first term.

Melania didn't always send the right message after she became first lady.



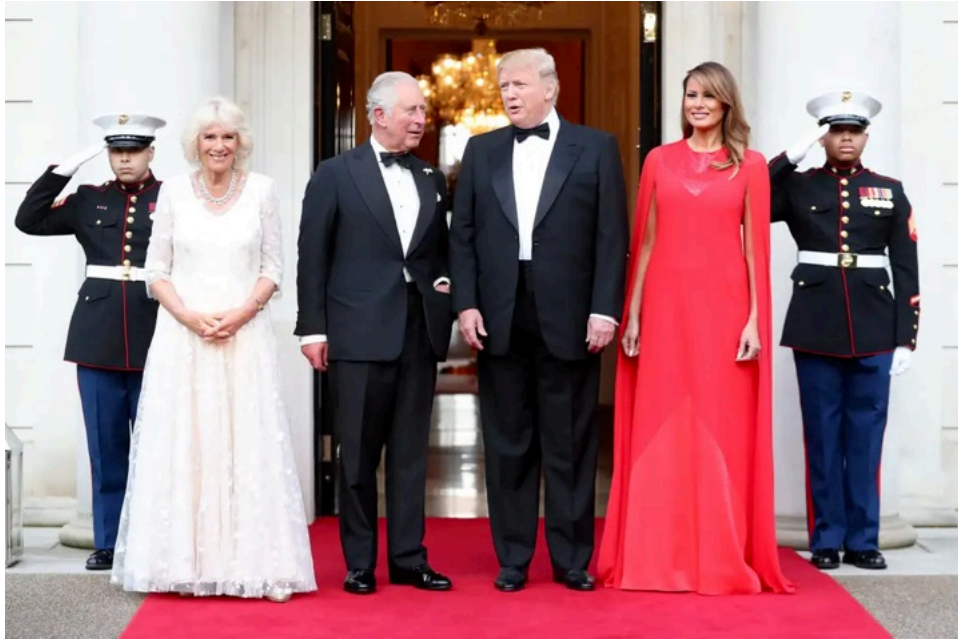
**In June 2018, Melania Trump wore a jacket that said, "I really don't care, do u?"**  
Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

In 2018, Melania visited the Texas-Mexico border to speak to child migrants wearing a green jacket that said "I really don't care, do u?" on the back.

The Zara jacket instantly became controversial, leading people to speculate that the first lady was sending a message to the president or migrants at the border.

In her book "I'll Take Your Questions Now," Stephanie Grisham, Melania's former aide, wrote that Trump yelled at Melania for wearing the jacket, though he later told media outlets she wore it to send a message to "fake news" outlets. Melania later repeated Trump's comments on the jacket, CNN reported.

But she dressed for the occasion when she had dinner with the royal family in June 2019.



**Then-Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles with Donald and Melania Trump at Winfield House in June 2019.** CHRIS JACKSON/AFP via Getty Images

Melania dined with members of the royal family at Winfield House in June 2019.

She wore a red Givenchy cape dress, a silhouette favored by royals like Kate Middleton and Meghan Markle.



She leaned into a professional look to accompany Trump to a September 2020 presidential debate.



**Donald and Melania Trump arrive in Ohio for a presidential debate in September 2020. MANDEL NGAN/AFP via Getty Images**

Melania accompanied Trump to the debate in a pinstripe Dolce & Gabbana suit.

She wore the jacket open over a white blouse with no tie and completed her look with Christian Louboutin heels.

**Melania wore contrasting looks on Inauguration Day 2021, sending two different messages.**



**Melania had an outfit change on Inauguration Day in 2021.** Noam Galai/The Washington Post/The Washington Post via Getty Images

When the Trumps left the White House on January 20, 2021, Melania wore an all-black outfit comprising a Chanel jacket with gold button detailing, a dress from Dolce & Gabbana, and Christian Louboutin heels. Black gloves and sunglasses completed the somber but chic ensemble.

But when they arrived at Mar-a-Lago later that day, Melania exited Air Force One in a \$3,700 Gucci dress, though she wore the same sunglasses she had on earlier that day. The loose gown featured quarter-length sleeves and an orange and navy print that hit her at the ankle.

"Like anyone, sometimes we take off our work clothes, and we put on our play clothes," Rothman said. "She went from wearing something super fitted to something loose that is right out of Palm Beach."

Her public appearances became less frequent in 2022, but Melania wore sparkles for a New Year's Eve party.



**Donald and Melania Trump at a New Year's Eve party at Mar-a-Lago in December 2022.** Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Melania kept her public appearances more limited after Trump left office, but she appeared alongside him at a New Year's Eve party at Mar-a-Lago in December 2022.

For the occasion, she wore another Dolce & Gabbana dress. The knee-length, silver gown had long sleeves. It was covered in sparkles, as were her pointed-toe shoes.



When photographed entering Trump Tower in June 2023, she wore a more casual look.



**Melania Trump walks into Trump Tower in June 2023.** James Devaney/GC Images

Melania paired a black long-sleeved top with a high-waisted, midi-length brown skirt from Martin Grant, which was belted with a bow at her waist. Her Chanel ballet flats featured both colors.

A black Chanel bag completed her look.

**When she attended the July 2024 RNC, Melania had returned to the first lady playbook.**



**Melania Trump at the Republican National Convention in July 2024.** Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Melania appeared at the Republican National Convention in July after being largely absent from Trump's campaign.

She attended in a blazer and coordinating skirt designed by Christian Dior. The entire outfit was red, the color of the republican party, even down to her pointed-toe, red heels.

Rothman said the outfit struck the perfect tone for the occasion because it seemed to send a specific message.

"There's more intention," she said. "From the red shoe to the red suit to the brighter hair on the stage, there's just more of a power punch of intention with that story than what she was wearing before she was in that role and was in her 20s."

"She understood the assignment," Rothman added.

Before her husband took office again, Melania wore a more daring look for New Year's Eve 2024.



**Melania and Donald Trump on New Year's Eve 2025 at Mar-a-Lago.** Eva Marie Uzcategui/Getty Images

Melania stepped out at Mar-a-Lago in a black Versace dress for the last day of 2024.

The gown had an asymmetrical neckline that scooped low, and the gown hugged Melania's figure before forming a slit on one leg.

It was glamorous and more reminiscent of her looks before Trump entered politics.

Her navy ensemble for the 2025 inauguration struck a different tone than her 2017 look.



**Melania Trump and Donald Trump on Inauguration Day 2025.** Scott Olson/Getty Images

Melania arrived at the 2025 inauguration in a custom navy coat designed by Adam Lippes.

The double-breasted jacket was elegant, and Melania paired it with navy pumps and a white scarf. However, the standout element of her look was her Eric Javits hat, which was also navy and white.

"It's a huge fashion moment," Rothman told BI of Melania's hat. She said the summery shape of the hat nodded to Melania's day-to-day life at Mar-a-Lago while the wool texture and dark colors spoke to the role she was stepping back into.

"She wore a hat that bridges her worlds together," she added.



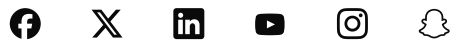
Melania changed into a black-and-white gown for the 2025 inaugural balls.



Donald Trump and Melania Trump at a 2025 inaugural ball. Jim WATSON / AFP

Melania again turned to Hervé Pierre for her evening look at Donald Trump's inaugural balls, donning a strapless white dress. Black fabric crisscrossed the bodice and the skirt to create a slit on one side.

A black choker made of the same fabric tied the look together.



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