

# 22. Dear Gabby: What's a Fit Model? \*Inside Edition!\*

 | [March 9, 2020](#) | [7 Comments](#)

Dear Gabby,

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I've heard you talk a few times about working with a fit model in the ready-to-wear industry, but I have questions. What does a fit model actually do? How do you work with one? Do you have to have one to design clothing? Are they like pattern testers?

Sincerely,  
Fittingly Fuddled in Florence

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Dear Fuddled,

What an excellent question! Fit models are awesome, and our post today will explore what a fit model is and does, and then, for your viewing pleasure, I've scored a face-to-face interview with one of the most in-demand fit models in the women's ready-to-wear business: **Jaclyn Jones**. Grab some tea and get ready to learn about a fascinating career in the fashion world!

First: what is a fit model? A fit model is a person who embodies (literally) your average customer, typically in the very middle of your size range. It is their job to try on your clothing, and help you evaluate the fit. You don't *need* one to design clothing, but having a live body try on your work before you go into production (in ready-to-wear speak) will typically help you avoid all sorts of problems down the road.

I'm speaking to this from an apparel industry standpoint, but many other people may want to employ a fit model — pattern designers, for instance. In fact, if you ever pattern test for someone, you are essentially performing some of the duties of a fit model.

So what does a fit model do, you ask? It's their responsibility to maintain their physical body to the exact specifications of their size to within 1/4", so they can

consistently fit with clients. Sound hard? Yup. If you ever work professionally with a model, you'll take their measurements monthly or sometimes biweekly, to make sure your brand "fit" is staying consistent. Models will usually also be measured by their agency, and they'll let you know if anything is changing. What could those changes be? Any kind of body or health issue that could affect shape loss or gain: for instance, pregnancy, bloating, etc.

But wait, there's more! Fit models also must be able to "speak to" a garment. Speaking to a garment means putting it on, and talking through any perceived problems — for example, if a collar band is too tight, or if the back of an armhole is digging in to their body in an uncomfortable way. They should be able to tell you what it feels like to wear your garment, and give you feedback that may not be immediately apparent, either by looking at the garment flat, or putting it on a dress form. Sometimes, you may have measured something and it's all exactly as you requested, but maybe the pattern has a balance issue, or a safety-stitched seam is chafing, or any number of other things you wouldn't necessarily be able to see if someone didn't try it on and walk around in it.

A lot of fit models have patternmaking and technical design backgrounds, which makes it easy to speak the same language and figure out problems and solutions. Communicating is one of their most important jobs; if something is wrong with a garment, but it's not called out and addressed before a gazillion units are cut and sewn, you may end up with a high return rate for a particular style, or it could sit on a store floor for months unsold because the fit is poor.

If a home sewing pattern designer is working with a fit model, they'll want to fit their garments just the same way, and then they'll use the feedback to adjust their base size pattern (the very middle size), and then grade it in either direction from there. A fit model's importance is hard to exaggerate; it's their body, after all, that dictates what the "fit" will look like at the end stage.

There are as many types of fit model as there are body types. I've personally worked with models ranging from babies, to teenagers, to petite, curvy, and plus-sized women of all sizes, to big-&-tall men, et cetera, ad infinitum.

If you ever start a brand, and want to start manufacturing clothing or patterns, you'd have to decide who you'll cater towards — for example, men who go fishing. In that case, you'd want to choose a fit model who exemplifies the average body type you imagine they'd have. (More athletic and wirey, subscribes to Field & Stream? Or... more Dad-Bod, who likes light beer & relaxing on a boat...? Up to you!) Also, it really helps to choose models who have a lot of experience with that type of garment — they'll be able to provide usable feedback on things that are not just about the fit, but stuff like the size of a fly box pocket on a shirt they already own.

And... now that you have the insider download: drumroll, please!

I want to introduce you to a very lovely and important fit model you should all know: **Jaclyn Jones**.



*A front view of Jaclyn, looking positively vampish and overall fabulous.*

Jaclyn fits Missy “curvy” sizing, for some of the biggest brands in the American RTW industry: [Anthropologie](#) , [Ann Taylor](#), [Land’s End](#) , [JCPenney](#) , [Kohl’s](#), [Macy’s](#) , [Rafaella](#) , [Urban Outfitters](#) , and [White House Black Market](#) , to name just a few.

(Oh, but what’s “curvy”? Curvy is essentially another cut of the same style — in this case, straight Missy sizing is an 8/10, and the curvy version would have all the same styling: pocket detailing, collars, lengths, sleeve and leg openings, the overall general look, in the same size, but cut for a curvy figure type. So a larger waist to

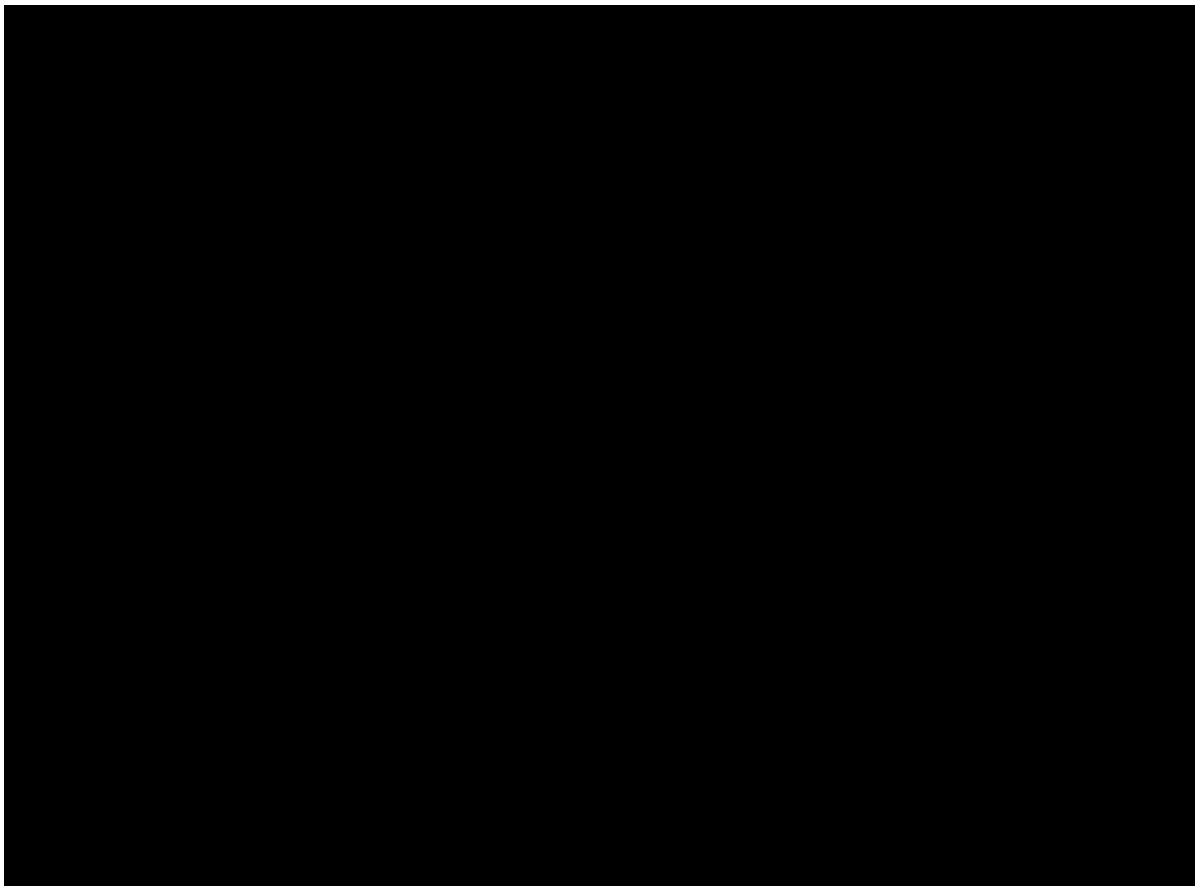
hip ratio, typically more than a 10" difference, fuller thighs and calves, etc. In RTW, when Jaclyn and I work together, I will have already fit Missy, and then I'll want to fit all the other body type iterations of the same style. Usually in women's that's petite, curvy, and plus size ranges. I'll bring pictures of the other size ranges in on their models, and we'll review it together to make sure everything looks consistent. Sometimes it's helpful to bring the different models together in person, and look at it all at the same time — usually you'd do this on big important programs, best-sellers, etc.)



Here's the lovely Jaclyn, looking sunny on a recent magazine cover with

*her toddler son.*

But I digress. Please enjoy an inside look on what being a fit model is really all about:



*Please enjoy this conversation with Jaclyn, where we discuss everything from becoming a fit model, to fitting tips and advice.*

Jaclyn is just one of the amazing models I've had the pleasure to work with, and her breadth of knowledge is absolutely stunning. When you have a good fit model, you have a treasure! If you'd like to follow Jaclyn, you can find her instagram [here](#). (She's private for understandable reasons, so just throw her a request. She's graciously allowing the sewing community access for anyone curious.) I hope you've enjoyed this snapshot into an incredibly important behind-the-scenes career!





*Jaclyn Jones*

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### **How to submit:**

Email [gabby@starislandxo.com](mailto:gabby@starislandxo.com), or DM me-> [@ladygrift](https://www.instagram.com/ladygrift) on Insta!

Send an explanation of your problem or question with a short video or set of photos, and your contact information. This can be purely for fit advice, sewing and technique questions, or really, any kind of sewing etiquette! Your submission will be edited into a blog post, so please note that by sending me a note, you are granting permission for your video/photos and sewing questions to be shared online. You are helping the community see all-bodied individuals! There is no shame or judgment — the end goal is to help you *make* clothing that feels great and that helps you *feel* the same way while wearing it.

See more [here.](#)



xo gabby

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*Gabby is a technical designer, fit specialist, and prolific googler. She lives in Denver, raises tiny littles, reads, embroiders, makes, experiments, fails, learns, tries again. See her on instagram [@ladygrift](#).*

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MARCH 11, 2020

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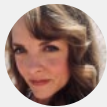


**Beth in Georgia**

MARCH 9, 2020 AT 9:14 AM (EDIT)

SO interesting! Thanks so much. You always have interesting insights and creative ideas. It was fascinating to get a peek into the process of bringing clothes from idea to hanging on the rack , and think about what can this bring to my sewing and to the pattern designers I sew.

Reply



**Gabby Brown**

MARCH 9, 2020 AT 10:04 AM (EDIT)

You're welcome, I'm so glad you enjoyed it!  Thank you for reading!

Reply



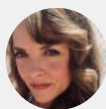
**Linda W**

MARCH 9, 2020 AT 10:02 AM (EDIT)

Thank you. The behind the scenes look was very interesting but I especially

appreciate the link to the stitch catalog. It's a big improvement over the info provided with my serger. And the dad bod definition made me laugh out loud!

Reply



**Gabby Brown**

MARCH 9, 2020 AT 10:05 AM (EDIT)

I'm glad you enjoyed- thanks for reading! I love that little stitch chart, so helpful!

Reply

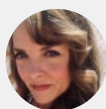


**caring is sharing**

MARCH 11, 2020 AT 10:15 AM (EDIT)

That's a fascinating read. For those who can access it in the UK, there's BBCiii series, still available on i-player, called Breaking Fashion (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p07mbvjm/breaking-fashion>) set in In the Style looking at how fast fashion gets looks out as fast as it does. That company has an in-house fit model who works for them, but gets additional money for being available to check the samples fast. It was criticised for advertising fast fashion and Internet influencers.

Reply



**Gabby Brown**

MARCH 11, 2020 AT 12:23 PM (EDIT)

Interesting, thanks for sharing! It's definitely a luxury to have an in-house fit model. I watched some clips on youtube- reminds me of that show Kell on

Earth, (I think you can stream it here in the US on various sites) which is about a fashion PR company that puts on fashion shows. Not so much the part about producing clothing, but the inside look into something that everyone thinks is glamorous, but actually is a total grind.

Reply



## #AllChestsWelcome: The Cup Size Conundrum – Sewcialists

AUGUST 5, 2020 AT 7:07 AM (EDIT)

[...] or using a pre-drafted cup size pattern piece, is based on the idea that garments are fit on a model who is a specific cup size — for straight sizes this is usually a 36B, as it is also in most RTW [...]

Reply

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