

Necklace Selection

Take a woman's age and body type into account when helping her find the right necklace

by Calla Gold

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Something just didn't look right in the photograph of my good friend. Everything was in focus, her smile was wonderful, but something was wrong. Her necklace threw me off – it didn't frame her face correctly.

Choosing the right chain or necklace isn't hard. Several factors steer this decision, including age, body shape and body composition.

Gauge by Age

Generally speaking, a woman's age plays a distinct role in determining the length of the necklace she should choose. Younger women with youthful skin should wear necklaces closer to the throat to show off their smooth skin. The gauge or thickness of the necklace should be narrow. Smaller pearls show best on youthful necklines. Pendants and charms should be on the small side too. Younger women who wear bigger, wider and flashier necklaces can look like they're trying to play "dress up" with their mother's jewelry.

Older women will want longer chains and necklaces to draw attention away from the neck and any apparent imperfections. Eighteen to 24 inches is a good general length. Gemstones or pendants should be two or more inches below the neckline. The longer necklace "elongates" the neck and frames the hair and face, creating an overall pleasing look. These women can wear bigger and wider chains and necklaces. Pearls and beads should be in excess of 7mm. Keeping size proportional, charms and pendants should be larger too.

Composition Class

After considering age, overall body composition, especially of the neck and the face, is important in choosing the right necklace. Most of the time, I follow these guidelines:

- Short neck: Wear chains starting two inches below the collarbone.
- Heavy or thick neck: Wear larger chains and necklaces, especially graduated and 18 inches and longer.
- Long thin neck: Have this customer try a triple strand of pearls, with the shortest strand hugging the base of the throat. The pearls should taper up with the curve of the throat. Avoid V-shaped chains. Softer, rounder necklaces are good, such as an 8mm-10mm omega.
- Bony neck: Medium to large necklaces. Avoid the base of the neck, the necklace should fall at least one inch below the collarbone.
- Soft, contoured, fleshy neck: Show this customer a "hard" necklace. Segmented is good, and it should be close to the base of the neck. Try making a statement with an angular pendant.

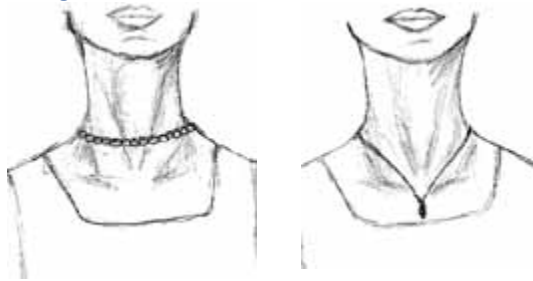
- Wide-based neck: Use flexible chains that drape well. Be sure the center is at least one inch below the collar bone. This customer is a good candidate for a longer chain. A 24-30-in. necklace helps negate the wideness at the base of her neck. A graduated necklace – very thin around the side of the neck and much larger below the collarbone – will add visual balance.

One More Thing

If you take these factors into account when showing necklaces, your chances for a sale will increase. You should be able to explain to a customer why she looks good with one length of necklace and not another. While a customer is admiring the necklace in a mirror, point out how it creates a pleasing symmetry that perfectly frames her face.

Caution: Please don't etch these rules in stone. Remain flexible. Bold, confident attitudes enable some women to wear necklaces that don't fit the usual recommendations. Similarly, if a customer is dead-set on getting something you think is dead wrong, don't put up a fight. If buying the piece makes her happy, help her be satisfied with the purchase.

Long Thin Neck

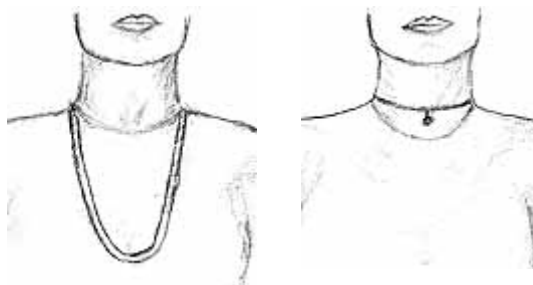


Do

Don't

Short, rounder necklaces are ideal for long, thin necks. V-shaped necklaces or chains with pendants will hang awkwardly and visually lengthen an already long neck.

Short Neck



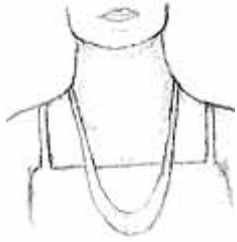
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Women with short necks should wear chains and necklaces at least two inches below the

collarbone. Chokers accentuate the shortness.

Heavy, Thick Neck



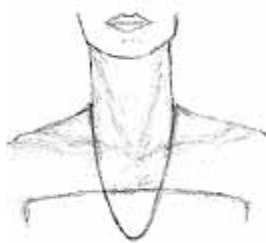
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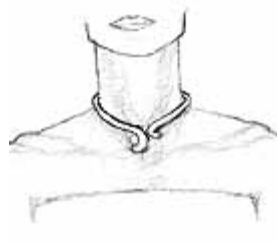
Don't

Elongate a heavy or thick neck with larger chains and necklaces. Graduated styles visually slim the neck, while shorter styles draw attention to a thick neck.

Bony Neck



Do



Don't

For bony necks, avoid styles that hug the base of the neck. Avoid hard or sculpted styles that sit uncomfortably on the bones at the base of the throat.

Calla Gold owns a retail business bearing her name in Santa Barbara, CA.

Illustrations by Lori Harmon