

The Great Debate

Goodwill Customer Laurie writes:

Dear Bjorn,

I always look forward to your monthly fashion tips on amazinggoodwill.com. I have a question that I'm sure others probably wonder about too. I can't be the only one. It's the old "hose or no hose debate." I'm never sure when to wear nylons or pantyhose. And then, how do you know when to wear opaque or sheer? What about all the new fashion colors and textures and tights this fall in hosiery? For instance, in fall, what is the right color of hose (nude or black) to wear with the Little Black Dress (LBD)? Is it ok to wear hose with sandals or is it just all wrong? What about with close-toed shoes? Thanks for your help with this one!

This debate about hosiery has gone on for quite some time. I will address it from different angles to give you a more clear-cut idea of fashion trends, social mores, practicality, and how they dictate almost any garment we wear!

The predecessor to pantyhose in the 20th century was a stocking. They were held in place by garter belts attached to girdle. Women wore these because socially a woman would not expose her bare leg in public unless at the beach. In the 1970s came the invention of the "all in one" pantyhose. Women everywhere adopted this innovation and a revolution was born. Flash forward to present day, where choices are plentiful and social lines have blurred.

From a modesty point, many women feel more comfortable wearing some sort of hosiery with skirts and dresses. If this is you, I would suggest trying to find something very sheer that would mimic your natural skin tone, as well as something that isn't too shiny. You don't want to look like a Vegas dancer!



These would be appropriate year round, but better suited to the warmer months, given the flesh tone. Make sure they have no toecaps or seams that would show with an open toed shoe. Most young women I spoke to about this, do not wear hosiery at all during the spring and summer months, and this is a definite trend. Remember the huge displays of pantyhose in drugstores? It would seem to be a thing of the past now, as they offer fewer selections and are more hidden away from view.

In fashion terms, hosiery is still very much in the game when it comes to variety. Sold in specialty stores and boutiques alike, there is everything from Lindsay Lohan designing a leggings and pantyhose line, to far-out fashionistas pairing ankle socks with high heels! A quick internet search told me styles and patterns abound. Tattooed designs, floral from DKNY and fishnets are all available for purchase. So that tells me that someone is buying them. But, the trendier the hosiery the more likely the wearer is in their 20s.



The best advice I can give is to think reasonably and seasonally. If you have the legs to go without hosiery in the spring and summer you should, but if modesty with style is an issue, try a cool pair of leggings with shorts, skirts and dresses in an appropriate color and weight for that season.

For fall 2009 many designers in Paris have shown the sheer black panty hose look with day and evening dresses. The absolutely safest way to go is with sheer black hosiery with the "LBD". Other options for the more adventurous include: herringbone patterns, laces and floral. When done in black they are also perfectly appropriate. Fishnets on the other hand should be left to performers and the very young and trendy.



Opaque tights tend to be more of a fall/winter choice, and again seem to be more appropriate to the fabrics of the garments they are paired with. They also seem more casual to me, so they should NOT be worn with evening clothing at all. Great with boots, jumpers and wool skirts, they also provide another layer of warmth during our cold winters. With tights go for texture, color and pattern, but be careful, because they can make legs appear heavier than they are.



Rules to remember:

DO what feels right for your personal modesty. Sheer nude hosiery is the best choice.

DO wear hosiery with closed toed shoes if you prefer, sheer in summer and opaque and tights in the winter.

DO wear sheer black hosiery with the LBD for a classic and classy look.

DON'T wear opaque or heavy hosiery in the summer months.

DON'T wear hosiery with sandals. EVER!

DON'T wear heavy opaque hosiery with evening dresses.

DON'T wear crazy colors or patterns if you are over a certain age. (You know what I mean!)



Laurie, I hope this gave you some insight into what will surely always be a matter of personal choice. Be true to who you are, but keep in mind societal convention as well as good old common sense!

Sincerely,
BJORN NASETT