

SIMPLE STYLE

THE PENCIL SKIRT

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

With its neat silhouette and demure length, the pencil skirt has become a favoured garment of the office worker. Which is not surprising: it is a skirt that suits bustling about efficiently and getting things done. When worn with a jacket or a crisp blouse, little beats this slim, knee-length skirt for cutting a professional dash and propelling you towards the boardroom.

It would be a shame, though, to restrict the wearing of this flattering skirt to the workplace alone. Providing it is not too tight or too short – when it can veer dangerously towards the vulgar – it is suitable for most occasions, from an evening out to a stroll in the park. Ideally, it should fit snugly over the hips, taper to just below the knee and have a kick pleat, vent or be made of sufficiently stretchy material to enable easy movement. There is a limit to what you can comfortably do in a pencil skirt. Cycling is tricky, as is dancing. And getting out of cars elegantly can be a challenge – although, as alumni of finishing schools will tell you, it's not insurmountable: put your knees together and swivel. But a pencil skirt isn't a piece of activewear, after all.



Marilyn Monroe puts a wiggle in her walk in a pencil skirt

When Christian Dior designed the first pencil skirt as part of his H-line collection in 1954, it was embraced by a generation of women pleased to show off curves previously hidden by A-line skirts. Unlike Dior's post-war New Look, with its voluminous skirts and tight waists, the H-line had a slimline, parallel silhouette that emphasised the hips rather than the waist. Marilyn Monroe knew this only too well and wore a pencil skirt with a wiggle to sexy advantage. Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly, on the other hand, went for a preppy look, teaming it with flat shoes and tucked-in blouses. And Miss Marple, that doyenne of country style, chose a comfy combination of pencil skirt, cardigan, flowery blouse, brooch and sensible shoes.

Prada and Gucci have recently rediscovered the pencil skirt's many virtues, and introduced it into their new collections. The chances are that you already have a perfectly good one in your wardrobe, though. Few items of clothing come close to matching its winning combination of wearable style and sassiness. **S**

“Few items of clothing match its combination of style and sassiness”

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THE UPDATE



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THE CLASSIC

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