

# SHORTS

## & TO THE POINT

Too long. Too brief. Get the lowdown on shorts

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If clothes are a game, then shorts are the limbo — how low can you go or, more likely, how high? Lengths are all over the place.

How to know what to wear? If the point of shorts is to stay cool, how can you actually be cool?

"In some ways, the rules are in the eye of the beholder," said Syn-di Seid, the San Francisco-based founder of Advanced Etiquette and author of "Etiquette in Minutes."

"But it comes down to common sense."

If you're that unsure whether shorts are appropriate to a situation, she said, don't wear them at all. If they are appropriate, but you don't know what length would be right, do your research. If it's a party, call the host and ask what would be OK. If it's a recurring event, look at what other people are wearing — people who look good and appropriate to the occasion.

Etiquette-wise, she said, it's important to consider others: If you show up in very short shorts, is it going to make others uncomfortable? If your shorts are hanging off your bottom and flapping around your calves, will other people feel awkward and embarrassed for you?

"Consider the culture of the group you'll be with," Seid said. "What is appropriate with them? What do they commonly wear?"

She also said that age can be a consideration on shorts length: "A 56-year-old woman with great legs can get away with something shorter and tighter, maybe," she said, "but you want to be honest about what looks good on you."

A manager at Zephyr of

Grand Junction said that Bermuda-length shorts are most popular among the store's customers, who tend to be more mature. Seid said there's nothing wrong with wearing longer shorts, because they're not so much a surrender to age but an adaptation to a changing body.

And youth doesn't necessarily give someone carte blanche to wear short shorts, anyway. Not everyone looks good in them, and they're not always appropriate in every situation. It's a matter of being honest and soliciting honest opinions, being willing to hear a truthful answer to, "Are these shorts too short?"

Fashion journalist Melissa Magsaysay, writing in the Los Angeles Times, offered these tips on shorts length:

- Look in the mirror. And turn a full circle. If you're not comfortable with any lumps or veins that might be visible, maybe go for a longer length. Also, sit down in the shorts. Does the crotch pinch or ride up so that you're having to constantly pull the hem down? Again, go longer.

- Try on the shorts and be honest about what works. Flat tab fronts and trouser-style waistbands are more flattering on shorter shorts. And give serious, serious thought to any inseam shorter than four inches. There aren't many situations in which shorts that short are appropriate.

- Embrace going longer as a fashion-forward choice of style. Not everyone can pull off a four-inch inseam. Consider, say, a seven-inch one — still cute and above the knee, but not so unforgiving to common trouble

areas such as the inner thigh.

- Remember that there is such a thing as too long. Again, try before you buy. Certain lengths can make certain legs — often shorter ones — look stumpy. Once the shorts head below the knee, it's time to be honest about how everything looks.

As for men's shorts, Esquire magazine has this advice: "This is how shorts are supposed to fit — not too long, not too short, and hitting just above the knee. Don't be one of those guys who wears really short shorts and doesn't care that his boxers are peeking out the bottom. And don't wear really long ones, either, since those are not, in fact, shorts but short pants. There's a big difference. Huge."

On his website, the Effortless Gent ([effortlessgent.com](http://effortlessgent.com)) further elaborates: "You want to hit that sweet spot with shorts, anywhere from juuust past your kneecap, to juuust above it. That's your safe zone. Any longer, and you start to wander into manpri territory."

"If your hemline starts to wander higher and higher above the kneecap (think 3+ inches above), you're approaching Mom shorts length. Keep going and you're all up in the hot pants zone."

"Anyway, you get the picture. **Between 2 inches above and 1 inch below your kneecap is the sweet spot.**"

But for both men and women, the goal of shorts is to stay cool in the hot summer months, and hopefully to look good while wearing them.

No limbo required.

Continued >





## CAPRI-LENGTH

**AKA:** Not a pant, not yet a short.

**Where they're seen:**

- Early spring barbecues.
- Early spring track meets.
- Early spring anything, really, accompanied by fervent prayers that winter is truly gone.
- Utah.

**What they might be saying:**

- "Oh, wow, I am so pale. Seriously, crypt-keeper pale."
- "This counts as dressy, right? I mean, it's just a baby shower."
- "I am convincing myself that a breeze on the of ankles and lower calves makes a difference, temperature-wise."
- "I have given serious thought to a possible cankle situation and decided, eh, screw it. They were on sale."



## KNEE-LENGTH

**AKA:** Hi, mom! Love you!

**Where they're seen:**

- Like, the Mom Store? Is there such a place?
- Anywhere that calls for casual yet sensible summer attire – a board meeting, say, or waiting outside the movie theater to ferry 14-year-olds home.

■ Bunco night.

■ Utah.

**What they might be saying:**

- "I am not 17 anymore and that is OK because I can legally buy wine."
- "Guess who didn't shave above her knees? Tra la la."
- "I could totally kick your butt so *hard* at golf."
- "If only I was in Bermuda..."



## MID-THIGH

**AKA:** God's gift to women's lower half.

**Where they're seen:**

- All over every single farmers market in the whole world.
- In every store, every airport, every park, every outdoor concert, every home...
- Everywhere, is the point.
- Sephora.

**What they might be saying:**

- "I look good, and I know it, and my legs might best be described as 'gams.'"
- "Oh, these are easy to wear. Perhaps I should move to Tuvalu, where I could wear them every blessed day."
- "Do not think I don't own these in every single color, because I do."
- "Here's to Baby Bear: not too short, not too long."



## SUPER SHORT

**AKA:** Like seriously, you guys. Totally.

**Where they're seen:**

- Well, where do coltish 14-year-olds hang out these days? The mall?
- Under the stands at JUCO.
- Anywhere that your mom would desperately beg you to make good choices, if she was with you.
- South Beach, or poseurs aspiring to be like it.

**What they might be saying:**

- "Boom chikka wow wowww."
- "No, *Grandma*, I do *not* want to go change. And what does that even *mean*, you can see the fringe on my inner tube?"
- "OMG! He totally Instagram stalked me! Eeee!"
- "It is so good to be young. Bask in my glory."

# MEN



## CAPRI-LENGTH

**AKA:** I keeesees you, my lovin'.

**Where they're seen:**

- ESL class.
- On the pages of men's magazines that keep trying to convince everyone that man-pris are acceptable.

■ Stores that sell gentlemen's handbags.

■ Skopje, Macedonia.

**What they might be saying:**

- "I eh-speak the English rich well, OK OK."
- "My pants are a symbolic representation of life as a never-ending slog through mud."
- "Dang it, I accidentally bought the wrong inseam and threw away the receipt."
- "Check out these ankles. /eahhhhh."



## KNEE-ISH LENGTH

**AKA:** Long live the Everydude.

**Where they're seen:**

- Everywhere.
- No, really: airports, two-for-one Jaegermeister nights, second dates, arraignment...

■ Seriously: christenings, Appalachian hollers, mountain peaks, NFL draft parties...

■ Also, Canada.

**What they might be saying:**

- "These are shorts as God intended them. Amen."
- "Yep."
- "I may or may not be capable of getting in a canoe without tipping it over."
- "Check out these calves. Yeahhhhh."



## MID-THIGH

**AKA:** Hipper than thou.

**Where they're seen:**

- The urban back yards of those newly embracing chicken husbandry.
- East Austin, Texas.
- Summer music festivals where the guy won't just sell you the kielbasa, no, first he has to tell you all about its free-range, grass-fed provenance.
- Atop a fixie – any fixie.

**What they might be saying:**

- "Wait, is Greenpoint still cool? Or should I be in Silver Lake? And sincerity replaced irony, right? Or was it insouciance? I'm so confused."
- "I encourage you to try my new line of artisanal raisins."
- "Check out these thighs. Yeahhhhh."



## SHORT

**AKA:** Oh, cabana boy...

**Where they're seen:**

- In the shower on Tobias Funke.
- Heading into and out of clothing-optional beaches.
- Key parties (or just, you know, the '70s in general).

■ Really depressing porn.

**What they might be saying:**

- "Yes, I'm the guy with the trained cat show on Duval Street."
- "I eschew the concept of personal space. Let us embrace in a healing hug."
- "Man, it was *always* legal to me, man."
- "Check out the entirety of these legs. Y... Wait, where are you going?"