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## What is the biggest bra size

Measure (usually 2 factors) to determine proper bra fit
Measuring for bra size: around the torso at the inframammary fold and over the bust
Bra size (also known as brassiere measurement or bust size) indicates the size characteristics of a bra. While there are a number of bra sizing systems in use around the world, the bra sizes usually consist of a number, indicating the size of the band around the woman's torso, and one or more letters that indicate the breast cup size. Bra cup sizes were first invented in 1932 while band sizes became popular in the 1940s. For convenience, because of the impracticality of determining the size dimensions of each breast, the volume of the bra cup, or cup size, is based on the difference between band length and over-the-bust measurement. Manufacturers try to design and manufacture bras that correctly fit the majority of women, while individual women try to identify correctly fitting bras among different styles and sizing systems.[1] The shape, size, position, symmetry, spacing, firmness, and sag of individual women's breasts vary considerably. Manufacturers' bra size labelling systems vary from country to country because no international standards exist. Even within a country, one study found that the bra size label was consistently different from the measured size.[2] As a result of all these factors, about 25% of women have a difficult time finding a properly fitted bra,[3] and some women choose to buy custom-made bras due to the unique shape of their breasts. Measurement method origins
1932 advertisement by S.H. Camp and Company, the first to correlate A-to-D cup size with the volume of the breast
On 21 November 1911, Parisienne Madeleine Gabeau received a United States patent for a brassiere with soft cups and a metal band that supported and separated the breasts. To avoid the prevailing fashion that created a single "monobosom"[citation needed], her design provided: "...that the edges of the material d may be carried close along the inner and under contours of the breasts, so as to preserve their form. I employ an outlining band of metal b which is bent to conform to the lower curves of the breast."[4] Cup design origins
The term "cup" was not used to describe bras until 1916[5] when two patents were filed.[6] In October 1932, S.H. Camp and Company was the first to use letters of the alphabet (A, B, C and D) to indicate cup size, although the letters represented how pendulous the breasts were and not their volume. Camp's advertising in the February 1933 issue of Corset and Underwear Review featured letter-labeled profiles of breasts. Cup sizes A to D were not intended to be used for larger-breasted women.[7] Warner's 1944 advertisement for its Alphabet Bras in cup sizes A to D In 1935, Warner's introduced its alphabet bra with cup sizes only to size D. Their bras incorporated breast volume into its sizing.[8] and continues to be the system in use today. Before long, these cup sizes got nicknames: egg cup, tea cup, coffee cup and challenge cup, respectively.[9] Two other companies, Model and Fay-Miss (renamed in 1935 as the Bali Brassiere Company), followed, offering A, B, C and D cup sizes in the late 1930s. Catalogue companies continued to use the designations Small, Medium and Large through the 1940s.[10] Britain did not adopt the American cups in 1933, and resisted using cup sizes for its products until 1948. The Sears Company finally applied cup sizes to bras in its catalogue in the 1950s.[11] However, though various manufacturers used the same descriptions of bra sizes (eg., A to D, small large, etc.), there was no standardisation of what these descriptions actually measured, so that each company had its own standards. Band measurement origins
Multiple hook and eye closures were introduced in the 1930s that enabled adjustment of bands. Prior to the widespread use of bras, the undergarment of choice for Western women was a corset. To help women meet the perceived ideal female body shape, corset and girdle manufacturers used a calculation called hip spring, the difference between waist and hip measurement (usually 10–12 inches (25–30 cm)).[12] The band measurement system was created by U.S. bra manufacturers just after World War II.[citation needed] Other innovations
The underwire was first added to a strapless bra in 1937 by André, a custom-bra firm.[13] Patents for underwire-type devices in bras were issued in 1931 and 1932, but were not widely adopted by manufacturers until after World War II when metal shortages eased.[14] In the 1930s, Dunlop chemists were able to reliably transform rubber latex into elastic thread. After 1940, "whirlpool", or concentric stitching, was used to shape the cup structure of some designs.[15] The synthetic fibres were quickly adopted by the industry because of their easy-care properties. Since a brassiere must be laundered frequently, easy-care fabric was in great demand.[citation needed] Consumer fitting
For best results, the breasts should be measured twice: once when standing upright, once bending over at the waist with the breasts hanging down.[citation needed] If the difference between these two measurements is more than 10 cm, then the average is chosen for calculating the cup size.[citation needed] A number of reports, surveys and studies in different countries have found that between 80% to 85% of women wear incorrectly fitted bras.[16][unreliable source?] In November 2005, Oprah Winfrey produced a show devoted to bras and bra sizes, during which she talked about research that eight out of ten women wear the wrong size bra.[17] Larger breasts and bra fit
A woman wearing an Australian brand, Elle Macpherson, with bra size 30E exhibits correct band fit (30) with a cup fit (E) that is too small for her. Her bra band is parallel to the ground and her breasts do not spill out under her arm, but there is major spilling of breast tissue over the top of the cup. Studies have revealed that the most common mistake made by women when selecting a bra was to choose too large a back band and too small a cup, for example, 38C instead of 34E, or 34B instead of 30D.[18][19] The heavier a person's build, the more difficult it is to obtain accurate measurements, as adjusting tape sinks into the flesh more easily.[20] In a study conducted in the United Kingdom of 103 women seeking mammoplasty, researchers found a strong link between obesity and inaccurate back measurement. They concluded that "obesity, breast hypertrophy, fashion and bra-fitting practices combine to make those women who most need supportive bras the least likely to get accurately fitted bras." [20] One issue that complicates finding a correctly fitting bra is that band and cup sizes are not standardized, but vary considerably from one manufacturer to another, resulting in sizes that only provide an approximate fit.[21][22] Women cannot rely on labeled bra sizes to identify a bra that fits properly.[23][24] Scientific studies show that the current system of bra sizing may be inaccurate.[25] Manufacturers cut their bras differently, so, for example, two 34B bras from two companies may not fit the same person.[26] Customers should pay attention to which sizing system is used by the manufacturer. The main difference is in how cup sizes increase, by 2 cm or 1 inch (= 2.54 cm, see below). Some French manufacturers also increase cup sizes by 3 cm.[27] Unlike dress sizes, manufacturers do not agree on a single standard. British bras currently range from A to LL cup size (with Rigby&Peller recently introducing bras by Elila which go up to US-N-Cup), while most Americans can find bras with cup sizes ranging from A to G. Some brands (Goddess, Elila) go as high as N, a size roughly equal to a British JJ-Cup. In continental Europe, Milena Lingerie from Poland produces up to cup R. Larger sizes are usually harder to find in retail outlets. As the cup size increases, the labeled cup size of different manufacturers' bras tend to vary more widely in actual volume.[24] One study found that the label size was consistently different from the measured size.[28] Even medical studies have attested to the difficulty of getting a correct fit.[29] Research by plastic surgeons has suggested that bra size is imprecise because breast volume is not calculated accurately: The current popular system of determining bra size is inaccurate so often as to be useless. Add to this the many different styles of bras and the lack of standardization between brands, and one can see why finding a comfortable, well-fitting bra is more a matter of educated guesswork, trial, and error than of precise measurements.[30] The use of the cup sizing and band measurement systems has evolved over time and continues to change. Experts recommend that women get fitted by an experienced person[31] at a retailer offering the widest possible selection of bra sizes and brands. Bad bra-fit symptoms
Back view of a properly fitted bra band worn parallel to the floor
If the straps dig into the shoulder, leaving red marks or causing shoulder or neck pain, the bra band is not offering enough support.[32] If breast tissue overflows the bottom of the bra, under the armpit, or over the top edge of the bra cup, the cup size is too small.[32] Loose fabric in the bra cup indicates the cup size is too big.[33] If the underwires poke the breast under the armpit or if the bra's center panel does not lie flat against the sternum,[34] the cup size is too small.[32] If the band rides up the torso at the back, the band size is too big. If it digs into the flesh, causing the flesh to spill over the edges of the band, the band is too small.[32] If the band feels tight, this may be due to the cups being too small; instead of going up in band size a person should try going up in cup size. Similarly a band might feel too loose if the cup is too big. It is possible to test whether a bra band is too tight or too loose by reversing the bra on her torso so that the cups are at the back and then check for fit and comfort. Generally, if the wearer must continually adjust the bra or experiences general discomfort, the bra is a poor fit and she should get a new fitting.[35] Obtaining best fit
Bra extension for the band
Bra experts recommend that women, especially those whose cup sizes are D or larger, get a professional bra fitting from the lingerie department of a clothing store or a specialty lingerie store.[31] However, even professional bra fitters in different countries including New Zealand[36] and the United Kingdom[37] produce inconsistent measurements of the same person. There is significant heterogeneity in breast shape, density, and volume. As such, current methods of bra fitting may be insufficient for this range of chest morphology. A 2004 study by Consumers Reports in New Zealand found that 90% of department store bra fittings resulted in a poor fit.[38] However, because manufacturer's standards widely vary,[39] women cannot rely on their own measurements to obtain a satisfactory fit.[citation needed] Some bra manufacturers and distributors state that trying on and learning to recognize a properly fitting bra is the best way to determine a correct bra size, much like shoes. A correctly fitting bra should meet the following criteria:[40][41]
When viewed from the side, the edge of the chest band should be horizontal, should not ride up the back and should be firm but comfortable. Each cup's underwire at the front should lie flat against the sternum (not the breast), along the inframammary fold, and should not dig into the chest or the breasts, rub or poke out at the front. The breasts should be enclosed by the cups and there should be a smooth line where the fabric at the top of the cup ends. The apex of the breast, the nipple, must be in the center of the cup. The breast should not bulge over the top or out the sides of the cups, even with a low-cut style such as the balconette bra. The straps of a correctly fitted bra should not dig into or slip off the shoulder, which suggests a too-large band. The back of the bra should not ride up and the chest band should remain parallel to the floor when viewed from the back. The breasts should be supported primarily by the band around the rib cage, rather than by the shoulder straps. The woman should be able to breathe and move easily without the bra slipping around. Confirming bra fit
One method to confirm that the bra is the best fit has been nicknamed the Swoop and Scoop. After identifying a well-fitting bra, the woman bends forward (the swoop), allowing her breasts to fall into the bra, filling the cup naturally, and then fastening the bra on the outermost set of hooks.[42][43] When the woman stands up, she uses the opposite hand to place each breast gently into the cup (the scoop), and she then runs her index finger along the inside top edge of the bra cup to make sure her breast tissue does not spill over the edges.[32][44] Experts suggest that women choose a bra band that fits well on the outermost hooks.[42][43] This allows the wearer to use the tighter hooks on the bra strap as it stretches during its lifetime of about eight months.[43] The band should be tight enough to support the bust, but the straps should not provide the primary support. [45] Consumer measurement difficulties
A bra is one of the most complicated articles of clothing to make. A typical bra design has between 20 and 48 parts, including the band, hooks, cups, lining, and straps. Major retailers place orders from manufacturers in batches of 10,000. Orders of this size require a large-scale operation to manage the cutting, sewing and packing required.[46] Constructing a properly fitting brassiere is difficult. Adelle Kirk, formerly a manager at the global Kurt Salmon management consulting firm that specializes in the apparel and retail businesses, said that making bras is complex. Bras are one of the most complex pieces of apparel. There are lots of different styles, and each style has a dozen different sizes, and within that there are a lot of colors. Furthermore, there is a lot of product engineering. You've got hooks, you've got straps, there are usually two parts to every cup, and each requires a heavy amount of sewing. It is very component intensive.[47] Asymmetric breasts
Obtaining the correct size is complicated by the fact that up to 25% of women's breasts display a persistent, visible breast asymmetry,[48] which is defined as differing in size by at least one cup size. For about 5% to 10% of women, their breasts are severely different, with the left breast being larger in 62% of cases.[49] Minor asymmetry may be resolved by wearing a padded bra, but in severe cases of developmental breast deformity—commonly called "Amazon's Syndrome" by physicians, may require corrective surgery due to morphological alterations caused by variations in shape, volume, position of the breasts relative to the inframammary fold, the position of the nipple-areola complex on the chest, or both.[50] Breast volume variation
Obtaining the correct size is further complicated by the fact that the size and shape of women's breasts change, if they experience menstrual cycles, during the cycle[16] and can experience unusual or unexpectedly rapid growth in size due to pregnancy, weight gain or loss, or medical conditions.[51] Even breathing can substantially alter the measurements.[29] Some women's breasts can change shape by as much as 20% per month: "Breasts change shape quite consistently on a month-to-month basis, but they will individually change their volume by a different amount ... Some girls will change less than 10% and other girls can change by as much as 20%." Would it be better not to wear a bra at all then? "... In fact there are very few advantages in wearing existing bras. Having a bra that's generally supportive would have significant improvement particularly in terms of stopping them going south ... The skin is what gives the breasts their support"[51] Increases in average bra size In 2010, the most common bra size sold in the UK was 36D.[18][52] In 2004, market research company Mintel reported that bust sizes in the United Kingdom had increased from 1998 to 2004 in younger as well as older consumers, while a more recent study showed that the most often sold bra size in the US in 2008 was 36D.[53] Researchers ruled out increases in population weight as the explanation and suggested it was instead likely due to more women wearing the correct, larger size.[citation needed] Consumer measurement methods
Bra retailers recommend several methods for measuring band and cup size. These are based on two primary methods, either under the bust or over the bust, and sometimes both. Calculating the correct bra band size is complicated by a variety of factors. The American National Standards Institute states that while a voluntary consensus of sizes exists, there is much confusion to the 'true' size of clothing.[39] As a result, bra measurement can be considered an art and a science.[1] Online shopping and in-person bra shopping experiences may differ because online recommendations are based on averages and in-person shopping can be completely personalized so the shopper may easily try on band sizes above and below her between measured band size. For the woman with a large cup size and a between band size, they may find their cup size is not available in local stores so may have to shop online where most large cup sizes are readily available on certain sites. Others recommend rounding to the nearest whole number.[54] Band measurement methods
There are several possible methods for measuring the bust. Underbust +0
A measuring tape is pulled around the torso at the inframammary fold. The tape is then pulled tight while remaining horizontal and parallel to the floor. The measurement in inches is then rounded to the nearest even number for the band size.[55][56] As of March 2018[update], Kohl's uses this method for its online fitting guide.[57] Underbust +4
This method begins the same way as the underbust +0 method, where a measuring tape is pulled tight around the torso under the bust while remaining horizontal. If the measurement is even, 4 is added to calculate the band size. If it is odd, 5 is added. Kohl's used this method in 2013.[58] The "war on plus four" was a name given to a campaign (circa 2011) against this method, with underbust +0 supporters claiming that the then-ubiquitous +4 method fails to fit a majority of women.[59] Underbust +4 method generally only applies to the US and UK sizes. Sizing chart
Currently, many large U.S. department stores determine band size by starting with the measurement taken underneath the bust similar to the aforementioned underbust +0 and underbust +4 methods. A sizing chart or calculator then uses this measurement to determine the band size.[60] Band sizes calculated using this method vary between manufacturers. Underarm/upper bust
A measuring tape is pulled around the torso under the armpit and above the bust. Because band sizes are most commonly manufactured in even numbers, the wearer must round to the closest even number.[61] Cup measurement methods
Pictogram for the European bra size 70B using EN 13402-1
Bra-wearers can calculate their cup size by finding the difference between their bust size and their band size.[60][62] The bust size, bust line measure, or over-bust measure is the measurement around the torso over the fullest part of the breasts, with the crest of the breast halfway between the elbow and shoulder,[63] usually over the nipples,[64] ideally while standing straight with arms to the side and wearing a properly fitted bra.[54] This practice assumes the current bra fits correctly. The measurements are made in the same units as the band size, either inches or centimetres. The cup size is calculated by subtracting the band size from the over-the-bust measurement.[65][66] The meaning of cup sizes varies
Cup sizes vary from one country to another. For example, a U.S. H-cup does not have the same size as an Australian, even though both are based on measurements in inches. The larger the cup size, the bigger the variation.[67] Over the bust/band measurement difference and cup size [68][69]
Difference (inches)

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