

A Guide to Bra Comfort

(Adapted from A Bra That Fits Wiki)

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Introduction

Many of us bra-wearers have suffered from bra discomfort. The idea that discomfort is part of wearing a bra is so prevalent that comfort is a selling point for many new companies that promise to “re-invent” the bra.

Bras are a marvel of engineering that can be incredibly comfortable if you are wearing the correct bra. The problem is, most bra-wearers are not wearing the correct bra. A big reason for this is marketing and sales techniques as well as pornography affecting societal expectations.

Speaking of expectations, I want to make it clear that your comfort is the top priority. If you are comfortable wearing sports bras or going braless, I highly encourage continuing with that. This guide is meant to reduce discomfort.

This guide will focus on underwire bras as they are not only the most supportive, but also the most difficult to fit. This guide will explain how to choose a bra to best fit your body.

Parts of a Bra:

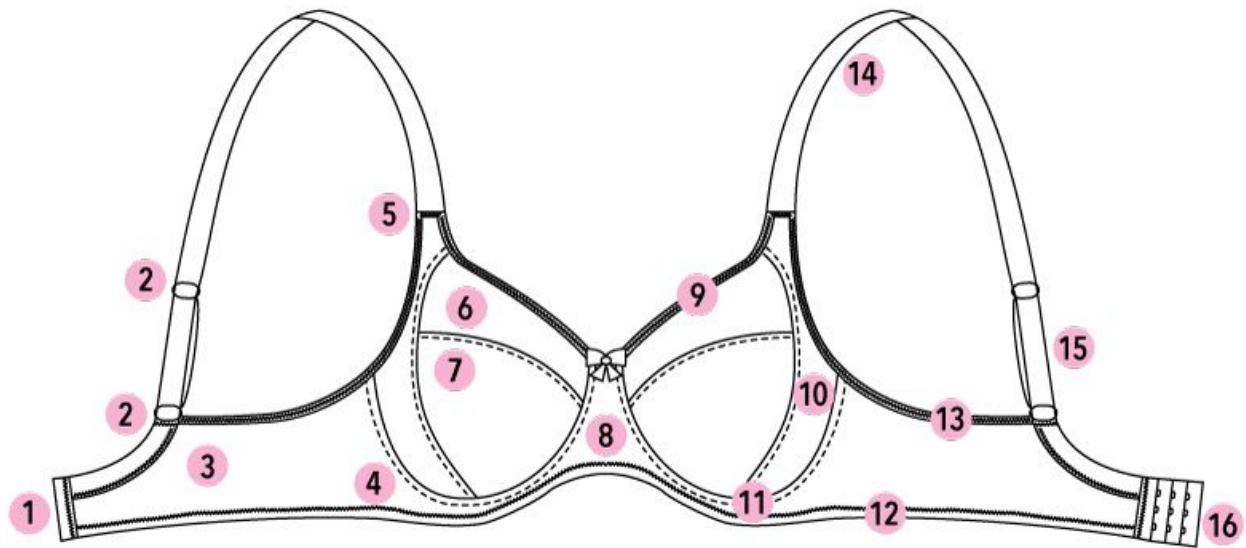


Image Credit: Haynes, 2017

1. Hooks
2. Adjustment rings and sliders
3. Wing/Band
4. Frame
5. Apex
6. Upper Cup
7. Lower Cup
8. Bridge/Gore
9. Neckline
10. Power Bar/Sling
11. Underwire
12. Under Band
13. Underarm
14. Strap Front
15. Strap Back
16. Eyes

Fit Guide

How to put on your bra:

(Anna, 2012)

1. Put it on! However is most comfortable for you.
2. Scoop and swoop part 1: Lean forwards and hold either the shoulder strap or end of the underwire with one hand, and reach into your armpit with the other. Gently scoop all the tissue from the armpit into the cup.
3. Scoop and swoop part 2: Still leaning forward, hold the bottom of the wire with one hand and reach into the bottom of the cup with the other. Use one hand to align the bottom of the wire to your root and gently lift the breast up into the cup with the other. You can also do a second scoop from the armpit while holding the bottom of the wire.
4. You may gently run your finger under the top edge of the cup to smoothen out wrinkles and possibly give a tiny tug at the top of the fabric. You should not pull at the fabric hard enough to unscoop your breast tissue.

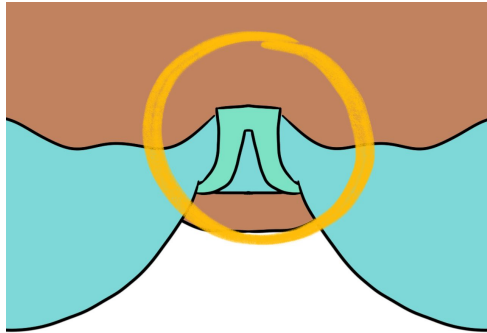
Checking your fit:

- 1. Band:** Is it comfortably snug and parallel to the ground?
- 2. Straps:** Are they not painful and staying on the shoulder?
- 3. Cup:** Are they filled but not overflowing?
- 4. Wires:** Are they following the root of your breast? (where the breast tissue attaches to your chest wall)
- 5. Gore:** Does it tack? (touch your sternum)

If you answered no to any of those questions, your bra has a fit issue. Fit issues can be due to size or shape.

Fitting Issues and Concerns

The Gore



The gore should be touching your sternum and should not cause pain.

If the gore does not touch your sternum, the cup is either the wrong shape or too small.

If the gore is painful, the cup may be too big, the wrong shape or your tissue may be too close set. The easiest fix is to look for a plunge bra. If the bra otherwise fits, you may bend the gore using a flat surface.

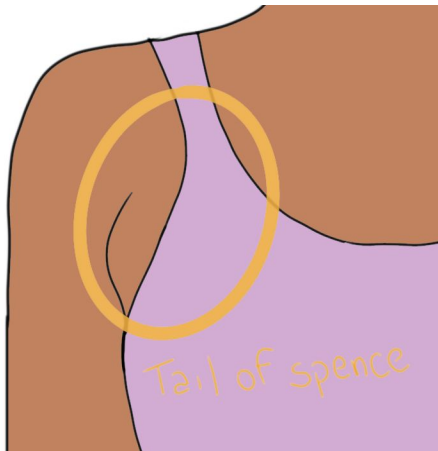
Red Marks

Red marks are not a bad sign unless they are accompanied by pain or last for more than an hour after removing the bra. Bra bands are elastic and need to grip the skin firmly, and so it is normal to have red marks.

Asymmetrical breasts

Most people have some level of asymmetry. The best technique is to buy a bra that fits the larger side. If the asymmetry is minor, the smaller side can be adjusted by tightening the strap. If the difference is noticeable or uncomfortable, you may buy some padding to fill out the cup on the smaller breast.

Armpit fat



First make sure this isn't your Tail of Spence (shown in the image) The Tail of Spence is made up of some lymph nodes and breast tissue.

The best way to get rid of armpit fat is to make sure you have wire enough wires and to scoop and swoop it into the cup.

Underwires Shifting Down

This can be caused by different fit issues that can be contradictory.

Wires shifting down can be a side effect of orange-in-a-glass, the breasts push the underwires down because the underwires are too narrow. On the other hand it can be caused by a too wide and shallow cup, if your breasts are projected they may not have enough room at the bottom of the cup so they push the cup down until there's enough space for them.

Bra Size

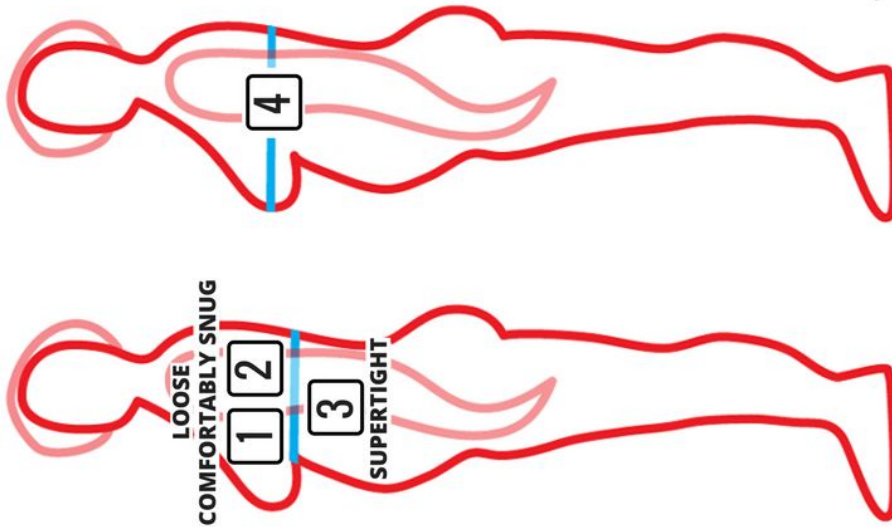
Calculating your size:

1. **Loose underbust:** Measure your underbust with the measuring tape loose snug on your skin being sure to keep it parallel to the ground. (it should be on the verge of moving around and not cut into your skin at all)
2. **Snug underbust:** Measure your underbust with the measuring tape comfortably snug on your skin, being sure to keep it parallel to the ground. (It should not be able to move around and dig into your skin slightly)
3. **Tight underbust:** Measure your underbust with the measuring tape pulled as tight as possible, being sure to keep it parallel to the ground. (Breath out to take this measurement)
4. **Standing Bust:** Measure the largest part of your bust while standing, be sure to keep the measuring tape parallel to the ground. (It should be loose and not cut into your skin at all)
5. **Leaning bust:** Measure the largest part of your bust while leaning over so your face is looking at the floor and your back is parallel to the ground. The tape should be straight and not cut into your skin at all.
6. **Lying bust:** Measure the largest part of your bust while lying on your back, be sure to keep the tape straight and keep the tape loose enough to not cut into your skin at all.

/r/ABraThatFits Visual Measuring Guide

MEASURE YOUR UNDERBUST:

- 1.) LOOSE - THE TAPE SHOULDN'T DIG IN AT ALL
- 2.) COMFORTABLY SNUG - THE TAPE SHOULD DIG IN A LITTLE, AS SNUG AS YOU WOULD WANT A BRA TO FEEL
- 3.) SUPERTIGHT - AS TIGHT AS POSSIBLE

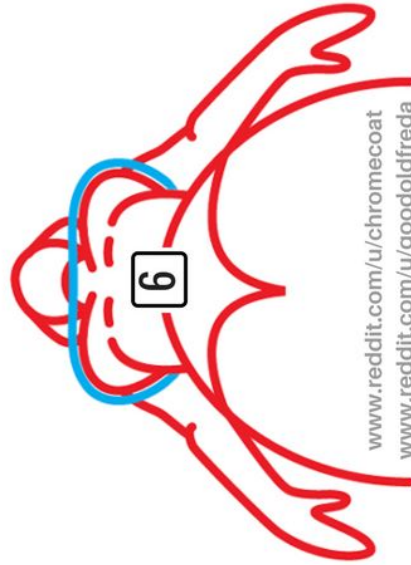
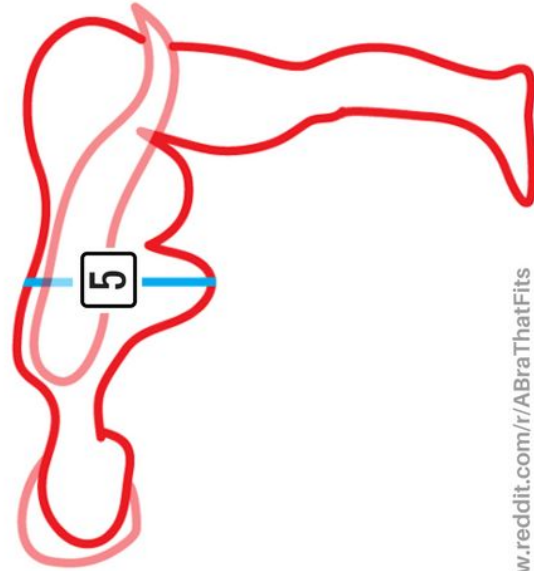


MEASURE YOUR BUST:

- 4.) STANDING - STAND STRAIGHT AND MEASURE LOOSELY AROUND THE FULLEST PART
- 5.) LEANING - BEND OVER AT 90 DEGREES AND MEASURE LOOSELY AROUND THE FULLEST PART
- 6.) LYING DOWN - LIE ON YOUR BACK AND MEASURE LOOSELY AROUND THE FULLEST PART

THE FOLLOWING information is NOT NECESSARY but may be helpful to arrive at a good solution

- 7.) ANY BREAST SURGERIES
- 8.) PREGNANCIES/BREASTFED CHILDREN
- 9.) CURRENT BRA SIZE



www.reddit.com/u/chromecoat
www.reddit.com/u/goodoldfreda

www.reddit.com/r/ABraThatFits

Step 1: Calculate your band size:

Round your snug underbust measurement to the nearest even number.

- I. If your snug measurement is closer to your tight measurement, round the number up.
- II. If your snug underbust measurement is closer to your loose measurement, round it down.
- III. If the difference between your loose and tight measurements is less than 3 inches, round the snug measurement up.

The rounded number is your new band size.

Step 2: Calculating a cup size

Part 1: Average your bust size

Assigned Female at birth:

Check the difference between your leaning and standing bust measurements. Is the difference greater than 2.5 inches?

If yes: Average all three bust measurements (4,5, and 6) by adding them up and dividing by 3.

If no: Use your leaning bust measurement for step 2.

Assigned Male at birth:

Use a weighted average: Add together your standing, leaning, and lying bust measurements (4,5, and 6) and then add your standing and lying measurements (4 and 6) again. Divide those by 5.

Part 2: Use the chart to find the cup-size

Subtract your band size from your average bust size. Then use the following chart to determine the calculated cup size. If your number is between two, count both sizes.

$$\text{Cup size} = \text{Average bust size} - \text{band size}$$

Difference	<1"	1"	2"	3"	4"	5"	6"	7"	8"	9"
UK cup size	AA	A	B	C	D	DD	E	F	FF	G

Difference	10"	11"	12"	13"	14"	15"	16"	17"	18"	19"
UK cup size	GG	H	HH	J	JJ	K	KK	L	LL	M

** Note: there are larger cup-sizes, the largest size sold is PP*

*** Note: These sizes are in UK sizing due to consistency, US sizing follows the same rules but is brand dependant after DDD. For example, some US brands call the cup after DDD a F, and some call it a G.*

Part 3: Final Adjustments

To put the final touches on your cup-size find the adjustment factor, x , by following the procedure:

1. Find the difference between the calculated band size and loose underbust measurement:
2. Round the difference to the nearest whole number
3. Divide by 2
4. Use this number as your adjustment factor

If your loose underbust is smaller than your band size: decrease your cup-size by x . This is your final cup size.

If your loose underbust is larger than your band size: increase your cup-size by x . This is your final cup size.

$$\text{Difference} = |\text{band size} - \text{loose underbust}|$$

Worksheet:

1. Loose underbust: _____
2. Snug underbust: _____
3. Tight underbust: _____
4. Standing Bust: _____
5. Leaning bust: _____
6. Lying bust: _____

Calculated Band Size in inches: _____

Average Bust Size in inches: _____

Bust size - Band size = _____

Cup size from chart = _____

Adjustment factor:

Loose underbust (inches) - Band size = _____ = X

Round X to nearest whole number = _____

X/2 = _____

Final cup size = cup size from chart +/- Adjustment factor = _____

Believe your size

After these calculations you are likely incredulous. You can't possibly be a _cup? That's impossible! I've seen a _cup before and that is not me!

Most commonly, stores sell AA-DD and our perception is: AA = "flat", A = "Tiny", B = "Medium-small", C = "Medium-large", D = "large", DD = "Extra-large".

Now, think about all the bra-wearers in your life. There are so many sizes of breasts! Imagine shoe store sold runners in sizes XS, S, M,L,XL. They probably wouldn't sell many shoes because it would be rather uncomfortable. Would they just sell sizes 5 - 10? What about half-sizes? Someone who wears 7 ½ would be stuck having to choose a shoe that's too tight or too loose. Imagine the stigma of wearing an XL shoe! I can't imagine that idea would be very popular.

Bras are incredibly complex. A 32D, for example, is actually much smaller than a 36D. There is no such thing as "D-cup", a cup-size can only exist when in conjunction with a band size. That's because bra sizes describe a volume and a proportion at the same time.

So why is the concept of 5 cup-sizes so prevalent? There are so many factors behind that common belief. Part of it stems from before fabrics were elastic and women needed to be able to breathe. It's often perpetrated by pornography, where women who likely would comfortably wear a 30HH are portrayed as the "DD" category. It's also perpetrated by bra stores that sell limited sizes, after all, their priority is making a sale. And finally, it's perpetrated by society starting as soon as people start thinking about bras.

So the bottom line is: try your new size!

Where to find non-matrix sizes

Most places sell the matrix sizes, from 30-38 A-DD. For non-matrix sizes, in the Lower Mainland region, there are a couple stores that sell all these sizes.

- Forever Yours
- Change Lingerie
- Diane's Lingerie
- Currans Lingerie
- Eye Kandee
- Nordstrom
- Scarlet
- Zammy's fine lingerie and Swimwear

Determine your shape

Projection

Projection refers to how much tissue you have compared to the root of your breast. Usually projected breasts have the tissue concentrated above a more narrow root and more shallow breasts have the tissue spread over a wider root.

The bra you wear has to match your level of projection. If the bra is too projected it will end up with empty space in the cup due to the “Orange in a glass” effect. The rim of the glass (wire) will sit on the orange (breast) and the cup will be empty.

Likewise, if your bra is too shallow for your breast, it is like trying to fit a plate over an orange. The edge of the plate will float and you will experience gaping.

Both of these fit issues will cause discomfort due to incorrect positioning of the wire of the cup.

Fullness

Fullness describes the position of your breast tissue when supported.

Even fullness: Is not very common, this is where all your breast tissue is distributed equally while supported.

Bottom fullness: Where the bottom half of your breast has more tissue than the top.

Top fullness: Tissue is more concentrated in the top half of your breast.

Center fullness: There is more tissue in the center of your breasts.

Outer fullness: There is more tissue in the outer part of your breast.

Leaning test: One way to determine fullness. Lean over so you're facing the ground and your back is parallel to the ground. Look at your tissue in relation to your nipple position. Does the tissue concentrate on the inside (nipples point outwards) or on the outside (nipples point inwards)? What about top and bottom?

Fullness determines where you need the deepest part of the bra to be located. If the deepest part is in the center of the bra but your breasts are center-full, then you will have too much tissue near the gore and experience overflow near the gore. If your breasts are top-full and the bra has the deepest part near the bottom, you will also experience overflow near the top despite being in a correct size.

Root width and Height

The width of the root refers to the width of the area where your root attaches to your body.

The height of the root refers to the height of the area where your root attaches to your body.

Choosing a bra with wires and cups that match your root will reduce discomfort and fit issues. A wire that is too narrow will sit on breast tissue and can cause tissue migration, a wire that is too wide will cause discomfort in the armpit region. A cup that's too tall will have gaping on the top while a cup that is too short will cut into the tissue and cause overflow.

Care of your Bra:

1. Rotate your bras so that none are worn two days in a row; let the elastic in the band "rest" between wears.
2. Hand wash your bras with a lingerie wash every 2-3 wears. If you must use a machine, we recommend washing your bras separately from other clothes, in a mesh lingerie bag, on the delicate cycle.
3. For the above two reasons, we recommend owning at least 3 everyday bras. This way, you are able to do your "braundry" once a week while still following these guidelines. If you prefer to wash your bras every other week, we recommend owning at least 5 bras.
4. **Air dry your bras.** This is the number one most important piece of advice in this list. Using any kind of heat to dry your bras is very harmful to the elastic and will cause your band to wear out quickly.
5. Don't squeeze or otherwise distort moulded cup bras - this encourages wrinkles to develop on the surface

References:

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