

Fashion by the book: If you're petite, want to model or are over 40, authors have advice for you
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By LaMont Jones, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Summer is always a good time to catch up on reading, and there are some new books on the market that address fashion trends and advice. Here are three that caught my eye:

Don't call them short people

More than 20 million American women are 5 feet, 4 inches or shorter, which in fashion qualifies them as petite.

However, millions of petite woman buy clothes that don't flatter them. Such women are petite whether they are size 2 or size 16, whether they are shaped like a pear or a carrot or a circle or an hourglass.

Kim Williams Dahlman, a petite fashion specialist, has made it her mission to help petites understand that and to use that knowledge to dress their best. "The Petite Handbook," written in 2004 and in its second printing, is full of information to help petites shop wisely and dress with confidence. With a shape finder, accessories advice and shopping checklist, the colorful spiral-bound booklet can fit easily in a purse.



**Kim Williams Dahlman,
author of "The Petite
Handbook."**

"I wanted sort of a 'Petite Dressing 101,'" said Ms. Dahlman, who was in Pittsburgh in March for an event at Macy's. "Everything you need to know in a nutshell. Other books are textbook style, where you really have to study them."

The author, a petite herself, knows her stuff. Over the past 20 years, she has worked as petite sportswear buyer for Allied Department Stores, corporate petite buyer for Belk Stores Services and director of sales for Susan Bristol Petites. She's appeared on numerous national television shows to share her expertise and travels the country presenting fashion shows, workshops and motivational programs for petites.

"I saw a huge need for a specialist in the field who would go out and do events and work one-on-one with customers," said Ms. Dahlman, who is based in Florida. "There are so many petite women out there that don't realize they should be wearing petite clothing and would get a better fit in the petite department. It's rewarding to get them to see how much better they're going to look in clothing that fits them right."