



## THE PERFECT FIT

Meet the fit models behind your favorite brand.

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*"An ill-fitting garment can lead to disappointing sell-through in stores."*

### Lauren Norman

**Agency:** The Fitting Room

**City:** New York

**Years of experience:** 4

**Clients:** Andrew Charles at Macy's (from Andy Hilfiger and Stephen Tyler), Brooks Brothers, Generra, Waitex, Do Denim

– Rachel Gilbert, Designer



Model: Lauren Norman

### What are the best and most challenging parts of the job?

At first, I wasn't used to standing still with my arms out so much. But now I have strong biceps! I came to New York like Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada*; being a fit model has given me an appreciation of fashion, and the incredible detail that goes into every choice of a garment. Now, I feel more like Emily Blunt.

### Do you ever feel overshadowed by other types of models?

I think it's important for each model to know their specialty. New York City is a very competitive place for all jobs, especially modeling, so I feel so fortunate to be able to maintain a healthy lifestyle and be a busy working model.

### Can you share one standout experience as a fit model.?

Andrew Charles was recently selected as the feature story for *WWD*. Because of my work as their fit model, Andy wanted me to do a photo shoot with Stephen Tyler's daughter Chelsea. We shot in the Gibson Guitar showroom, and it was awesome.

Between the mannequin and the clothing rack, a garment takes shape by experimentation. Strangely enough, the tweaks to a piece of clothing (more fabric here, maybe a cut-out there) look different on an inanimate, headless object than a real-life shopper. Enter fit models: the desirably proportionate chosen few who usher a designer's idea from sketch to reality.

Fit models hold an important niche in the apparel market, and though they often work behind-the-scenes, they're critical to the birth of nearly every garment. Designers often cut their patterns around the shape of fit models, where, for women, the ideal is usually somewhere around 5'7" or 5'8" and a U.S. size 4. "My team and I tend to use fit models at all stages of the design process, from draping newly sourced fabrics on the model to final fitting stages," says Daniel Feld, a *Project Runway* alum and designer of the line KYMERAH. For every category of clothing, from swimwear to denim to jackets, the ideal proportions vary — though across the board, fit models hold more attainable shapes than runway models.

Natasha Duswalt, the president of Peak Models and Talent in Los Angeles, says the slightest differences in frame can make a fit model perfectly suited for one type of apparel and nearly excluded from another. "In the swim market, the models tend to be taller, due to the need for the proper torso measurement," she says. "Even though people come in all shapes and sizes, in swim, the torso length is key to fitting a broad range of bodies. With denim, the rise is key to proper-fitting jeans, along with a great hip-to-waist ratio. If a woman is too small-waisted, there might be issues fitting the general public."

Working properly with a fit model can save a designer hassle in production (with less sample revisions), plus boost the financial reward in the end. "An ill-fitting garment can lead to disappointing sell-through in stores," says designer Rachel Gilbert, who adheres to a three-stage fitting process with her models as she moves from concept to distribution for her self-titled line. Veronique de la Cruz, the designer of Aquarella Swimwear, meets with a fit model on a weekly basis — but then checks the pieces herself. "I personally try every single suit that is being produced," she says.

We spoke to five seasoned fit models from across the U.S. to see how their careers impact the industry, what kind of perks they can expect and whether they feel overshadowed by the ladies who walk the runway.