

Q&A: SPRING'S BOLD PRINTS

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Q: All my fashion magazines are showing big, bright prints for spring. I am petite - just over 5 feet tall. Is there any way I can wear these prints without being overwhelmed?

A: Big, bold prints certainly are one of the trends for spring - but by no means the only trend.

If you feel overwhelmed by oversize prints, choose smaller prints. There are plenty of those to choose from, too.

Kim Williams Dahlman, author of "The Petite Handbook," suggests using the "fist rule" to determine whether a print or pattern is right for you. Make a fist, then hold it up to the print, she advises. If the print is the same size or smaller than your fist, it won't overwhelm your petite frame. If it is larger than your fist ... well, you get the idea.

Another option is to wear just a small amount of an oversize print or pattern - on a scarf or handbag, for example - and keep the rest of your outfit simple and monochromatic.

If you'd like to check out more of Dahlman's handy tips, visit thepetitehandbook.com.

And speaking of petite dressing, some stylists now are suggesting that petite women forget the long-held truism that monochromatic dressing makes them look taller. Try teaming a dark skirt or pants with a vivid jacket or blouse, they suggest. The bright color will draw the eye upward, making the wearer appear taller. They might be onto something.