

Can't afford the dress? Get the figure



Dita Von Teese, in little black dress, with Roland Mouret MJ Kim/Getty Images

Jane Dowling

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The fashion designer Roland Mouret is known for dresses that flatter. He inspired celebrity fitness trainer Jane Dowling to create an LBD workout

The little black dress is the trustiest of fashion staples, especially at Christmas when a dress needs to take you from office to office party with only a change of heels and a flick of lipstick. Roland Mouret, the fashion designer and one of my clients, knows how to make the most of the feminine silhouette, emphasising sharp shoulders, a tiny waist and just the right amount of curve. But to really work that LBD, you need to make the most of your assets. Few of us look like models, but we can all do something to make our bottoms a

little more pert, our waistlines slightly more nipped and our tummies flatter. My Top Ten tips, inspired by Mouret, will help you to do just that.

1 One day on, one day off

Do all the exercises one day and rest the next. This gives your muscles a chance to recover and become stronger.

2 Added weights

Use two big baked bean tins or two one-litre bottles of water to make the exercises harder and more effective.

3 A beautiful back

The “prone-fly” exercise will help to emphasise your back muscles, improve your posture and make you appear taller and slimmer. You’ll be able to wear an off-the-shoulder dress with confidence.

How to do it:

Lie face down on the floor with a tin of beans in each hand.

Your arms should be straight out to the sides, so that your hands are in line with your shoulders.

Bend the elbows slightly and lift the arms off the floor, squeezing the shoulder-blades together.

Repeat 15 times.

4 A lifted bust

Three-quarter press-ups strengthen the muscle in the top of the chest, lifting the bust.

How to do it:

From the prone position above, come up onto your hands and knees, making sure that your hands are about 15in (35cm) to the side of each shoulder. The knees should not be directly under your hips but a little farther back.

Bend the elbows, bringing your chest to the floor.

Go as low as possible without touching the floor, then push up.

Really pull in the tummy.

Repeat 15 times.

5 Daily tummy tightener

You can do this daily, and almost anywhere: at your desk, while on the phone or in a supermarket queue. This exercise needs concentration as the more you pull in your tummy, the more you educate your muscles to do it involuntarily.

How to do it:

Find a coarse piece of string that can be tied around the waist.

Let your tummy relax and tie the string snugly around your waist, under your clothes. Pull in your tummy really tight so you cannot feel the string.

Put this on for an hour a day, either while sitting at your desk or carrying out chores.

Each time you relax your tummy you will feel the string and it will make you pull in your stomach.

To make this harder: leave on the string for longer.

6 Extra tummy flattening

In a figure-hugging dress, our lower tummy muscles can let us down, so the reverse curl is great for this area.

How to do it:

Lie on the floor on your back, hands straight out to your sides.

Lift up your feet so they are directly above your hips, and cross your feet.

Lift your feet towards the ceiling, curling the hips off the floor from the tailbone to the waist.

Very slowly lower the hips to the floor, keeping the tummy pulled in very tight.

Do not let the hips just drop down; control is very important here.

Repeat 15 times.

To make this harder: Cross the arms over the chest.

7 Working the waist

Side-bends are great for the waist. You will need a big bottle of water.

How to do it:

Stand with your feet just wider than your hips, knees slightly bent.

Hold each end of the water bottle and lift above the head.

Slowly bend to the right by about 12in (30cm) keeping lower body still.

Then slowly straighten up. As you bring yourself up, pull in your tummy really tightly.

Hold just for a second in the middle, and make sure you pull your tummy in, before repeating on the other side.

As you do the exercise, imagine that you are between two panes of glass and you cannot move your body forward or backward.

Repeat 15 times. Right to left counts as one repetition.

8 A pert bottom

This exercise is a wide leg squat with heel rises. You will need a chair to hold on to.

How to do it:

Hold on to the chair and take the feet wide, with toes pointing out at 2 and 10 o'clock.

Lift up your right heel. Keep your knees over your ankles.

Drop the hips down but keep them higher than the knees.

Move the hips up and down by about 12in (30cm), keeping your weight central. Push the bottom back slightly. Think about squeezing the bottom especially on the right side.

Pull your tummy in to tone it and to support your back.

Repeat 15 times, then repeat 15 times on other leg.

9 Extra bottom booster

A single leg squat.

How to do it:

Hold on to a chair. Take one leg behind you, lift about 6in (15cm) off the floor and keep it straight.

Bend the knee of the supporting leg, keeping the knee above the ankle and the back straight.

Go as low as possible but don't drop the hips lower than the knees. Keep the hips square, try not to twist. This way you will work the back of the thigh and the bottom, helping to lift and tone.

10 Walking your way into great shape

Walking is a great way to burn fat. You need to do at least 20 minutes of brisk walking each day.

Get the most from your walk:

Make sure that you are upright and tall. Pull the tummy in tight, put the shoulders back and swing the arms.

Adopt a good heel-toe action.

Breathe deeply to get oxygen to the muscles. This will help your muscles to look leaner and more toned.

Jane Dowling has a Power Plate and Personal Training Studio in Central London. To try the “Little Black Dress” workout class, contact: fitnessforeverybody.co.uk

Need a little extra help to shape-up?

Slimsticks: A powder that is made into a drink and consumed before a meal. It contains Fabules, a combination of palm and oat oils that has been shown to control appetite for up to eight hours. Rigorous clinical testing, including studies at the University of Liverpool's appetite and obesity centre, show that Fabules can reduce calorie intake by between 12.5 and 30 per cent.

Stockist: Lloyds pharmacies and from slimsticks.com (£29.99 for a 30-day pack)

Rating: 9/10

Zotrim: A supplement made from South American herbs. In a University of Liverpool study, 58 women who took the pill with their breakfast ate an average of 132 fewer calories for lunch compared with those who took a placebo. Overall, calorie intake was reduced by 17.6 per cent.

Stockist: zotrim.com; (£21.95 for a month's supply)

Rating: 8/10

Maxitone Sculptress shakes: This range is based on the principle that protein helps to fill you up and curb hunger pangs, which has been verified in numerous studies. Each shake contains 179 calories and 32 grams of protein.

Stockist: www.maxitone.com (£29.99 for 700g tub)

Rating: 5/10

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