Did you ever price the hats in an exclusive shop — in a "French room," for instance? Did you wonder how a handful of felt and feathers — a bit of velvet and ribbon — could be worth the price tag displayed? If you know anything about materials, and if you've realized the small amount of "coverage" in a hat, you must be able to deduce that the price tag involves something else besides material, labor, and selling costs. Of course it does — and that element is style.

There should be nothing awe-inspiring or mysterious about the word "style." Every woman can develop her sense of style — by observation and comparison. Not only is it educational but it will be fun as well. You will find inspiration in movies, museums, fashion magazines and society pages of newspapers. In your weekly visit to the movies, notice how carefully hats and accessories are chosen for their dramatic effect — and how each star's costume is an ensemble. This is what you will be able to achieve for yourself — once you have made your first hat.

Just as some clever designer, using knowledge of line, color, material, workmanship and trim, has combined these factors into an exclusive design, so can you. It is designed to give the customer a new look — a different appearance — a glorified presentation. It is very real to a style-conscious woman, even though style is almost intangible when we seek to analyze it.

We can examine material and workmanship: we can like or dislike a color or trim, but when it comes to telling exactly why a hat looks "smart," we simply know that it is — or that it isn't. (Men, by the way, so often have a surer sense of style than women!)
HAT LINES

The line of a hat, of course, plays a large part in its style. This varies and changes through the years, but contrary to most theories, it is a gradual and evolutionary change.

Hats do change—methods of technique are always in the process of development; new trims and materials are "invented"; but on the whole, silhouettes (or lines) remain static throughout a period of years. Hats that survive season after season, and that we all come to be familiar with, are known as classic styles. Each year there is a fresh avalanche of turbans, berets, sailors, pillboxes, etc.

The Doll Hat: One major change occurred a number of years ago when a French designer introduced the "doll hat." It swept the millinery world by storm. It was not so much a change in line as it was a change in the size of the crown. Because the hat was small, the hat, naturally, sat much farther up on the head. The brims on these little hats were the same width brims that we were used to seeing; they
only looked different because they were worn on the head tipped at such an extreme angle — and much more of the top of the crown was in evidence.

The radical change in size (and incidently in line) came in too quickly to remain for very long. Doll hats went out overnight, but their influence remained and the milliners struck up a happy compromise which persists to the present time. You will find many small crowns on the market today. They are larger than the doll hats, but smaller than hats that fit over the large part of the head.

HEADSIZE AND NONHEADSIZE HATS

Anyone can wear a “nonheadsize” hat, because it is so shallow that it will fit all average headsizes. If the hat is perched forward on the top of the head, the fitting adjustment is made in the bandeau which anchors the hat to the head. If the hat is worn on the back of the head, it is held by pins, chin veil, or any other arrangement that will make it stay on the head.

If these crowns were larger and deeper, they would fit over the large part of the head. In this case they would be headsize hats, and each one would have to be made to fit an individual headsize.

Lots of older women favor headsize hats because they cover the hair and because of the comfort and stability involved. As far as style is concerned, one of the best headsize hats is a casual or swagger type hat. The crowns on these hats are delfty blocked and manipulated; the brims have a subtle swing. Even though they are headsize, they don’t look heavy.

Nonheadsize hats usually show a great deal of hair. If your hair is well cared for, a nonheadsize hat will give you a well-groomed final effect.
There is, now, a real alliance between hair and hats. Witness the "pompadour" hat (a pillbox or crown, pushed to the back of the head so that the hair is emphasized and the hat becomes secondary to the hair).

When the pompadour goes out, there will undoubtedly be another style to complement another hair-do. For example, hats are being designed for the "flat top" hairdress.

No one can predict just how soon we'll be wearing "lots of hat" again. When hats get to be as small as they can be (and still be called hats) and when women get tired of them and no new treatment seems possible, then the Millinery Cycle will turn and reverse itself. That is the nature of fashion.

Here are three general rules about "line" that may help you to differentiate between good styles and bad styles:

1. Rule of Balance:
   If your brim is small, more attention is paid to the crown. It might not only be taller and of an odd shape, but it also may carry an unusual trim, detail work may be more elaborate.
On the other hand, if your brim is outstanding — either in size or in treatment — the crown will probably be underemphasized.

The third alternative in “balancing” your hat concerns trim. If it is unusual or elaborate, both crown and brim are apt to be small.

In years past, hats have often been “heavy-looking.” For instance, the hats worn by Lillian Russell all gave the impression that the wearer’s head (when she put on a hat) was large in proportion to the rest of her body. The brim and crown were not only large, but the trimming was lavishly abundant.

Today, we want our heads to appear in proportion to the rest of us. The head silhouette is more or less “natural” even after we put on a hat. Using the “rule of balance” keeps us from having “too much hat!”

2. Rule of Eye-line:
Most women seem to feel instinctively that an asymmetrical (one-sided) placement of the hat on the head is more flattering than a symmetrical (straight) placement.

**EYE-LINES**

They may never have heard of the art principle “a curved or broken line holds more interest than a straight one,” but they observe it nonetheless in the wearing of hats. (Men, too, feel this way — very few of them wear their hats placed squarely on the head.)
Eyeline hats, designed to be worn asymmetrically.

Suit your own taste— wear it tilted or straight!

As a general descriptive term, an "eye-line" hat means one that comes forward, touching (or seeming to touch) at least one of the eyebrows. Generally, this eye-line descends toward the right side and rises more or less sharply on the left side. A few women reverse this line; then the eye-line descends toward the left side and rises on the right.

Forward headsize hats usually have the eye-line established on the crown. When these hats are brimless, it is easy to see how the eye-line has been cut out.

Hats that have brims, such as casuals and swaggers, have the same cut-out eye-line, and the swoop of the brim is dependent upon the eye-line.

These eye-line hats are made to be worn at an angle — and the line of the hat is spoiled if the hat is set squarely on the head. On the other hand, there are many small (nonheadsize) forward hats that are made straight — the crown line is not cut away — and these hats may be worn and adjusted according to your own personal preference.

When you buy your hat block, you can establish the eye-line by drawing it into the wood, with a sharp pointed pencil.

Hat block with an "eyeline". Draw a line and use it as a cutting guide.
Almost all hats show the contour of the back of the head, in a profile view.

This will help you when you are cutting out the crown for a forward headsize hat, whether it is brimmed or brimless.

**IMPORTANCE OF A HAT BLOCK**

A block is a “head dummy” — head-shaped — and its cost of a few dollars is fully justified by its many uses. It is as useful to a milliner as an eyeglass to a jeweler, a forge to a blacksmith, or a dummy to a dressmaker. It is one of the tools of hat making.

You may hear of “square heads” or “blockheads” — but actually, you will find that all human heads are more or less round in shape.

(Hat blocks are more fully discussed in Chapter II.)

3. **Rule of Contour:**

If we wear a hat of almost any description, it adds something to the head silhouette. This change in silhouette is one of the main reasons why we wear hats — we feel that it varies and improves our appearance to add a new and different line.
This line may run forward to either side, down, or up.
You will notice that among all the variations of lines there is one spot that is left undisturbed—that is, the contour line at the back of the head. In almost all hats, the silhouette of the back headline is left clean and free.
Hats with brims observe it by showing the line above or below the brim. Hats that have a down movement (some sort of a ruffle or snood running across the back) observe it by showing the line above the material at the back of the head and neck.
Small forward hats leave the contour line undisturbed by not covering or interfering with the head silhouette.

Why women wear hats
This silhouette change is not, of course, the only reason why women wear hats. They are worn because they frame the
face and introduce contrasting or harmonizing colors close to the eyes, hair, or skin; they confine unruly hair and give a well-groomed appearance; they complete and add character to many different kinds of clothes; they express personality; they help to gain social and business prestige.

A psychologist would tell us that a new hat satisfies three primary emotional needs:

1. The wearer participates in current happenings.

2. The wearer achieves personal recognition.

3. The wearer gains the response of her audience, be it large or small.

Hats are still worn as a protection against heat and cold; but if this were the only reason that could be advanced for wearing them, we might all just as well be wearing sunbonnets in the summer and babushkas in the winter! This would mean that only the young and fair of face would ever show up advantageously. Indeed all women have real reason to be grateful to milliners!