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Ordering Jeans Straight, With a Touch of Stretch

By ALINA DIZIK



Hunting for The Perfect Pair of Jeans can be an arduous challenge. With a few clicks, WSJ reporter Alina Dizik tries online made-to-measure jean shopping via sites IndiDenim, Thumblr and MakeYourOwnJeans.

Every six months or so we spend time twirling in front of dressing-room mirrors searching for the perfect pair of jeans. Typically, we leave empty-handed.

Our particular problem? Finding jeans that look decent on a 5'3" petite frame with just a bit around the middle.

Several services say they can help picky shoppers in their denim pursuits. The companies create jeans that are custom-sewn to each person's specific dimensions and can be easily ordered online.

We put three custom-jean services to the test along with Zafu Inc., which doesn't actually create the jeans but recommends ready-made options based on a shopper's dimensions. Many of the services offer several styles for men and women, including straight leg, boot cut or skinny, with some companies even providing options for pockets or buttons. Customers can also pick the rise of their jeans as well as the particular denim.



The order process was thorough. We were asked for measurements we never knew were necessary for jeans: knee circumference, back rise and even how wide of a leg opening we'd like. Each site provided thorough explanations about how to take these measurements. Some of the companies asked for our weight, bra size—even our ethnicity. To be even more precise, the sites suggested we use an old pair of favorite jeans to double-check the dimensions we listed. Each pair took less than 20 minutes to order.

Picking out jeans at IndiDenim.com was enjoyable. The site, owned by Emeryville, Calif.-based Archetype Solutions Inc., had plenty of options for styles, back pockets and even finishing treatment (sanding, whiskering, distressing, for example). Instructions on the site were clear to understand and the online jean-builder tool was simple to use. It took six weeks to deliver despite the four-week production time shared on the website. We did receive an email telling us of the slowed production.

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal
IndiDenim.com Style ordered: slim-fit skinny with flap pockets

"There's a lot of variability in denim so occasionally a jean has to be re-cut," explained Chief Executive Marybeth Lubber.

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal
MakeYourOwnJeans.com Style ordered: skinny

The quality of the denim was our favorite but the jeans were slightly too long and fit too low on the waist even when we had requested an average rise. Fit adjustments can be exchanged free of charge, says Ms. Lubber, who founded the company less

than three years ago. The site allows for easy reordering and customers can slightly alter their measurements to get a more precise fit. "We want it to be spot on," she says.

Makeyourownjeans.com, run by Mumbai, India-based HarryFashion, allows shoppers to choose from more than 200 types of denims but we found it difficult to discern the quality from the pictures and descriptions. We chose a classic fabric with a bit of stretch for a pair of skinny jeans. Entering our measurements was simple and measuring tips were helpful. At \$65, the jeans were the most affordable and arrived three weeks after we placed the order. The fit was precise but too much stretch in the fabric made the jeans fit more like leggings. We would have wanted a fabric swatch before committing to the particular denim. Dealing with customer service for an unexpected address change was simple.



F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal
Thimbler.com Style ordered: straight leg

Our jeans from Thimbler.com were the easiest to order. Choices were limited to five styles (no skinny style) and four denim fabrics so choosing our jeans was simple. To check one of our measurements, Thimbler sent an email confirming the numbers we entered were correct. The pair arrived a month later, and we received another note making sure we were happy with our jeans. Thimbler's jeans fit well but were a bit longer and looser than we expected from a straight-leg style. The denim was an accurate color but the fabric felt lighter than expected. Charles Tse, who founded the company in 2007, says they typically add an inch to customer's length since customers tend to provide inaccurate measurements. Currently, the company is working on creating mall kiosks in several U.S. locations that will have 3-D scanners so customers can get measured in person. Right now, the in-person service is only offered at the company's Raleigh, N.C., headquarters.

For a fee, Zafu.com, the jean-referral service, gave suggestions for jeans based on a questionnaire about our body. Recommended jeans were separated by the rise of the jean and included cuts of popular brands like Levi's and Tommy Hilfiger. We also received a summary of our trouble spots like an "undefined waist" and that we should look for jeans that give us more "feminine curves." The recommendations didn't come

with online links to the retailers so we needed to go to the specific stores to complete a purchase. (The site will soon include links to stores that carry the brand, says founder Rob Holloway.)



Most of the brands we hadn't tried on before, so it was interesting to see Zafu's tailored picks. We chose a few pairs to try on during a shopping trip. A store employee told us that our first pick, 529 curvy jeans from Levi Strauss & Co., were no longer available in Levi's stores. We found our second choice a boot-cut pair from Old Navy right away. Indeed, the jeans fit well and we bought them without trying on another pair.

F. Martin Ramin for The Wall Street Journal

Zafu.com Recommendation: Old Navy Flirt boot cut

While all the jeans were a good fit, it was still difficult to find one pair that was all that we wanted. The IndiDenim jeans came close. Our custom jeans did take our trouble spots into account

but in a few cases we'd expected shorter lengths and heavier fabrics. To help shoppers get an even more precise fit all of the companies offer free exchanges. Perhaps we'll find a perfect pair the second time around.

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In Search of the Right Fit

Here's a look at four websites that aim to get customers into the perfect jeans:

WEBSITE	PRICE	PRODUCTION TIME	QUALITY	COMMENT
IndiDenim.com	\$155 to \$170	Four weeks	Good fit, uses premium fabrics.	Customizable detailing on jeans, great styles.
MakeYourOwnJeans.com	\$39 to \$70	Two to three weeks	Great fit, though denim had too much stretch.	All types of custom clothing available. Choice of many different fabrics.
Thimble.com	\$119 to \$185	Two to three weeks	Good fit, few choices of cuts and fabrics.	Offers in-person body scanning at Raleigh location, good customer service.
Zafu.com	\$5 for one-week trial or \$15 a year; jeans priced from \$25 to \$250	Not applicable.	Some picks were a good fit, could not find all recommendations.	Over a hundred different brands and styles are recommended for various body types.

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