

# Fads and fashion trends in the 1970s



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## Fun Fads

Fads, short-lived trends that surface in every decade, provided a great deal of entertainment during the 1970s. These fads defined a decade, not in terms of political defeats or scientific advances, but in bringing people together in odd and quirky ways. Fads brought life and character to a decade that would be unaware of its lasting legacy.

One fad that was extremely popular during the 1970s was the Pet Rock. Created by Gary Dahl in 1975, it came in a cardboard box with a handle and air holes with wood shavings underneath the rock. It even came with its own training manual, titled *The Care and Training of Your Pet Rock*, on how to care for it. They quickly became popular, especially during the Christmas season. However, it was short-lived and slowly became unpopular until 1976.

Mood rings, created by Joshua Reynolds in 1975, was a popular fad. Made out of a liquid crystal inside the quartz, their color changed when the wearer's body temperature changed. Each color the ring displayed represented a different mood, amounting to seven different colors. For example, black represented sadness while brown represented insecurity. Initially became popular in New York City as a way to express oneself. After two years of release, however, it lost its popularity.

Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots were invented in 1964 by Marx Toy Co. but reached its peak in popularity in the 1970s. It involved a red and blue robot inside a boxing ring, each operated using joysticks that allowed them to jab each other with their fists. The winner is determined by which robot's head pops up when they are hit on the chin. Although very simple, the fad

provided hours of entertainment in the 70s as players can enhance the game with their own imagination.

Earth Shoes was another 1970s fad. The shoe was introduced by Anna Kalso in 1970 and had a sole that was thicker at the front of the foot than at the heel. When worn, it stretched the way the foot moved. Earth Shoes had health benefits such as improving an individual's posture and breathing. They became extremely popular but was unfortunately discontinued in the late 1970s.

The shampoo Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific was another 1970s fad. Invented by Andrew Jergens Company, the shampoo makes one's hair soft and smell like flowers. Many ads for the popular shampoo had a man telling a woman the shampoo's name, Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific. The shampoo bottle came in magenta with bright lettering.

Roller Skating was another fad of the 1970s. They were boots that were a few inches taller than the average shoe and had wheels at the bottom. People would wait in line to receive roller skates in order to enter a roller rink to skate in circles. These rinks allowed people to show off their skills, blend in the crowd, and find potential mates.

Lava lamps were also a fad in the 1970s. Created by Edward Craven Walker, they consisted of a mixture of water and wax. The heating of the wax allows it to rise and expand. It was a fascinating sight to watch the wax in the lava lamps move, which made them popular home decorations. However, the popularity of the lava lamp began to cool in the late 70s.

Grinning, yellow, smiley faces were also one of the fads in the 1970s.

Bernard and Murray Spain made their own variations of an already existing smiley face in 1971. The smiley face was on many products such as mugs and t-shirts. It became popular especially during the Vietnam war when there were lots of prevalent negativity.

Rubik's Cubes, invented in 1974 by Erno Rubik, captivated the world with its design of 26 individual colored cubes with the goal of making each side one uniform color. They went onto the mainstream market by 1977 and quickly gained popularity thanks to investments and advertising. The Rubik's Cube would soon become a true fad of the 1970s.

Weebles, tiny plastic egg-shaped people that wobbled, became a staple fad of the 1970s. Manufactured and headed by Romper Room, they gained much popularity not only due to their unique shape but also their wide variety of figures spanning from Sesame Street characters to cowboys. Entering the market in 1969, the Weebles captivated a whole generation of children who admired their novelty and dexterity.

In looking back at the fads of the 1970s, it is clearly evident that, despite how short-lived they were, these fads truly defined a generation and help us, in the present day, understand their approach to entertainment, consumerism, and social interaction. Although some of the fads were dying out, others were later resurrected such as the Rubik's Cube. Their individual legacies commingle in order to form the larger legacy of the 1970s.

Funky Fashion

The birth and development of fashion styles during the 1970s allowed countless individuals to express themselves in different ways and in many settings, whether it be out in the sun or at an office meeting.

One of the fashion styles that were really popular were leisure suits. Leisure suits contained matching casual trousers and jacket. Men usually wore leisure suits. The suit was made out of polyester and was often made in bright colors or plaid. Leisure suits were often worn with platform shoes and gold chains. However, it slowly became unpopular in the late 70s.

Platform shoes were also popular in fashion during the 1970s for men and women. The shoe had a tall heel that would often have flashing lights. Popular artists such as Elton John wore platform shoes as well which helped with the shoe's popularity. However, once disco slowly became unpopular, so did platform shoes.

An additional fashion style that was prevalent during in the 1970s were hot pants. They were extremely short shorts that came up to an individual's belly button. They were often worn with bright tights and long boots. They often came in bright colors of fabrics such as denim or velvet. This fashion style, however, began and ended in 1971 but were still used in the roller rink and disco parties.

Bell-bottoms were pants with legs that become wider below the knee and were an extremely popular fashion during the 1960s and 1970s. The belled or flared legs on bell-bottom

pants were originally solely a functional design, worn by those who worked on boats since the seventeenth century. The large legs allowed the pants to be easily rolled up out of the way for such messy jobs as washing the decks. In addition, if a sailor fell overboard, bell-bottom pants could be pulled off over boots or shoes and the wide legs inflated with air for use as a life preserver.

Fringe suede vests was also a popular fashion style for women and men in the 70s. Most of the vests were worn over loose tops and shirts that are buttoned down. The vests had a western style to them as they were often fringed that looked like strings.

Jumpsuits, popular in 1970s fashion, were dresses which often had spaghetti straps or short sleeves for the top and pants-like legs for the lower half. Based on the suits worn by pilots in the Air Force, they were brought back to the public eye in the 1970s by designers such as Norma Kamali and Yves Saint-Laurent. Countless celebrities of the era were attracted by the jumpsuit flowing nature and comfort. from David Bowie to Audrey Hepburn.

Furthermore, crinkle boots were widespread and popular in the 1970s. Its material, shiny vinyl, gave the boots a distinct shiny and wrinkled look. Their texture was not particularly smooth, yet they were comfortable to wear and even went up to knee-high levels.

Floppy hats, though popular in the 1960s, rose to great prominence in the fashion world in the 1970s. Their evolution saw the choice of designers to add more flair and character to the oversized and large and flowing brimmed hats. Designers made floppy hats more lightweight by using different fabrics,

greatly widened the range of colors, and would often add simplistic embellishments such as ribbons. Celebrities such as Bianca Jagger would wear floppy hats at their weddings, a true sign of how the hat penetrated into the fashion world.

Moreover, tracksuits shook the fashion world in the 1970s with their dexterity, being used by a wide range of people from mountaineers to casual joggers. Their influence even spread to

people who were not particularly athletic but appreciated the tracksuit's comfort and flexibility. With their widespread use, the designers of the time experimented with various fabrics and designs in order to maximize the user's comfort and give the tracksuit a clear style that would stand out.

Knit sweaters, the child of knitting machines found in countless homes during the 1970s, became a fashion staple of the era. These sweaters, which rose to prominence at the time due to a surge of revivals and new-takes of traditional clothing, were bulky and simplistic yet still had a fun and quirky character. In the late 1970s, those in the new Punk movement chose to rip off their sleeves as a sign of their nonconformity to traditional standards.

Fashion has always been a way to express oneself, to manifest one's identity and personality through the clothes and accessories they wear. Whether it be through bell-bottoms or jumpsuits, knit sweaters or floppy hats, people in the 1970s knew that what they wore not only mattered to those who saw them, but most importantly to themselves. As wacky and odd some of the clothing may seem, it reflected the looseness and progressiveness of the time.

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