

Dress to Impress

Just another Roblox video game or a deeper reflection of the fashion industry as a whole?



Dress to Impress operates like a gamified version of Project Runway (developed by user Gigi at 17 years old)

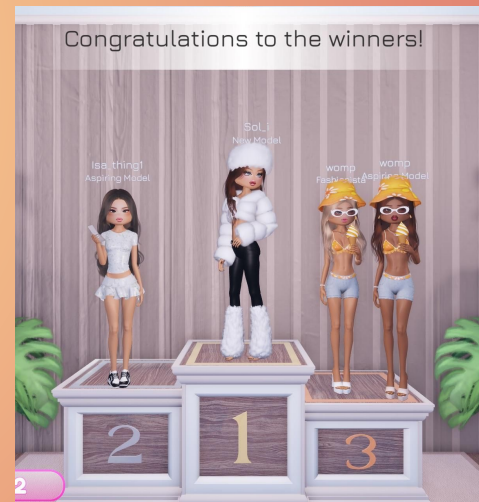
Each round, players receive a theme, for instance, 'Mall Goth,' 'Boho-Chic,' or 'Album Cover', and have roughly six minutes to curate an ensemble that aligns with the prompt.



The game offers a massive in-game showroom where players choose up to 35 pieces of clothing and accessories. They can also personalize makeup, skin tone, and nail color.

What is the judging system?

After styling, players walk the runway, strike poses, and receive scores from the other players, with 1 to 5 stars. The top three scorers make it to the podium. It's competitive, performative, and most importantly, social. There's also a 'Freeplay' mode for those who prefer a creative sandbox, and a newer feature called 'Style Showdown,' an elimination-based mode introduced in March 2025, modeled after *RuPaul's Drag Race*.



One of the most celebrated aspects of ***Dress to Impress*** is the variety of fashion themes. These include aesthetics rooted in **real-world subcultures** — Harajuku streetwear, Lolita fashion, Y2K, and even obscure aesthetics like ‘Mall Goth.’ This diversity of options gives players a chance to **experiment with different styles**, often ones they may not feel comfortable exploring in real life due to cost, societal expectations,



"Dress to Impress exploded in mid-2024 thanks to **a blend of celebrity endorsements and viral TikTok content**. Streamers like Pokimane, Madison Beer, and James Charles brought the game to mass attention. Madison Beer even described the game as **'healing'**, not just entertaining, but **emotionally restorative**.



DTI IRL

DTI mirrors the real fashion world's **growing embrace of aesthetic diversity**. Players unlock items using in-game currency or Robux, and sometimes through promotional codes, mechanisms that parallel shopping, loyalty programs, or even fashion drops in the real world.

TikTok soon amplified this effect: players posted absurd outfit combinations, while others mimicked in-game emotes like 'Pose 28' in real life. At New York Fashion Week, influencers appeared dressed in outfits inspired by the game, **blurring the line between virtual and physical fashion**.



If NYFW Looks Were Dress to Impress Themes

Shein/fast fashion marketing vs. Dress to Impress

While ***Dress to Impress*** is playful and inventive, it also raises concerns about the ethos it promotes. The six-minute time constraint mirrors the speed and disposability of fast fashion. The game emphasizes **trends over substance** (with no research about the subcultures they represent) a dynamic that has long defined fast fashion brands like Shein, Zara, and H&M.

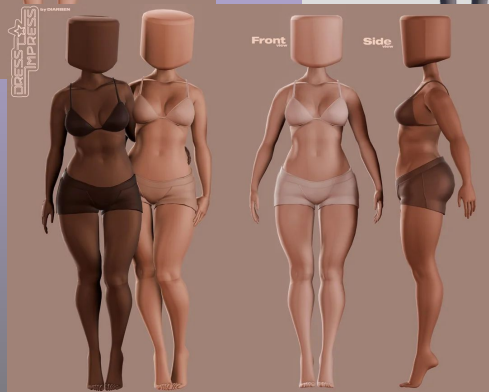
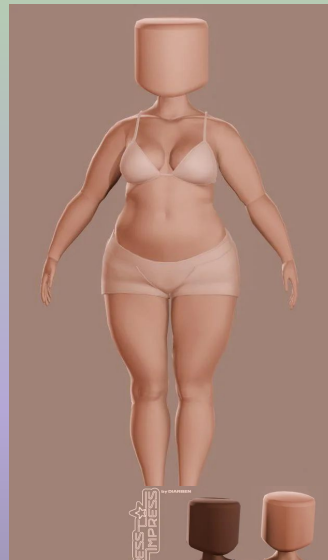
Players are actually encouraged to switch styles rapidly, **to consume without commitment**. This begs the question: are we training a generation to view clothing as purely aesthetic, devoid of political or material weight?



So...what do the models look like?

In late 2024, *Dress to Impress* introduced **plus-size body types** for female avatars. Many players celebrated this step toward inclusion, particularly TikTok creators who finally saw themselves reflected on screen.

Reports alleged that the game's creator, Gigi, had mocked the team's 3D modeling efforts and resisted adding larger bodies. Critics also pointed out that the new avatars weren't truly plus-sized (just marginally curvier) and still upheld beauty ideals. This controversy echoes the fashion industry's own struggles with performative diversity (offering tokenistic representation without actual structural change)



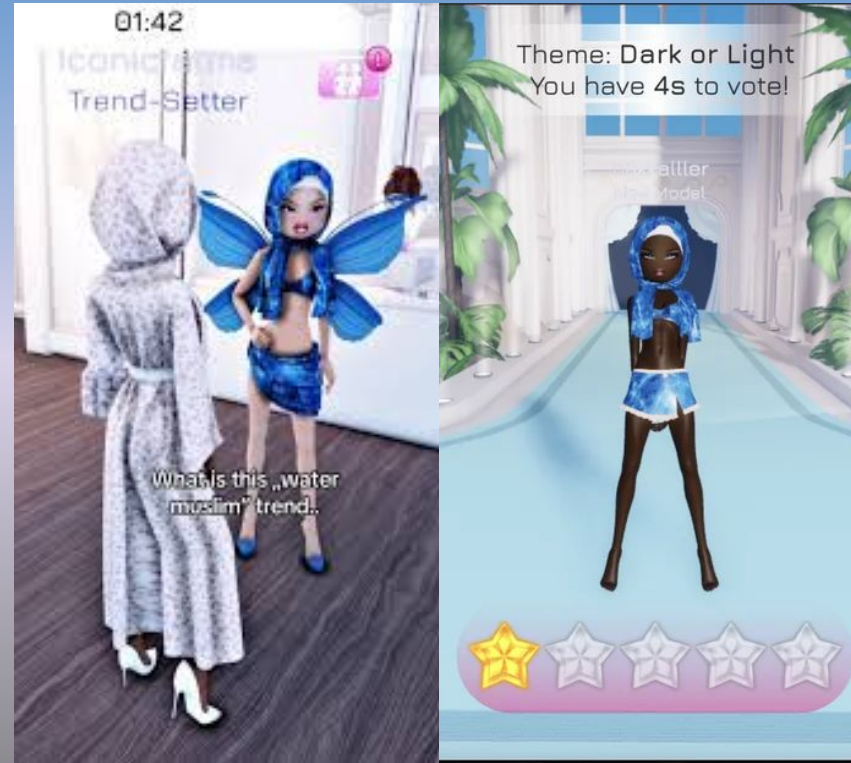
Dress to Impress is free to play — but not equally accessible. The VIP pass, which unlocks exclusive makeup, clothing, and hair, costs 299 Robux per month or a 699 Robux one-time fee. For many players, VIP status is the only way to compete meaningfully in higher rounds.



This introduces a class system within the game, mirroring how real-world fashion privileges wealth. The richer your avatar, the better your odds. It's a gamified version of what happens on red carpets and in luxury showrooms every day. **Creativity is welcome, but access costs money**

Another major controversy involved the addition of hijabs, a well-intentioned feature that quickly led to problematic outcomes. Some players began pairing the hijab with highly revealing outfits, spawning a derogatory meme called **“Water Muslims.”**

This cultural insensitivity reflects deeper issues of appropriation and misunderstanding that also impact the mainstream fashion world. Without educational context or moderation, representation can become mockery.



Sources and Image Credits

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