The anticipation Andie Walsh, the heroine of the 1986 film “Pretty in Pink,” felt for prom has endured for subsequent generations of high school girls. Her fashion choice for the special night? Not so much. While legions of teens today still relate to the character on an emotional level, you can expect them to veer sharply from the coquettish pink polka-dot dress she sewed together from two hand-me-down gowns.

“Girls take dressing for prom very seriously,” said Jane Fort, editor-in-chief of TeenPROM magazine, citing a recent Hearst survey that found 97 percent of teens purchase a new dress for prom. “On average, a girl starts shopping for her prom dress three months before prom, visits seven stores and tries on 24 dresses,” Fort said.

To forecast 2012’s dominant styles, Fort examined hundreds of dresses at prom trade shows, interviewed dress manufacturers and tuned in to runway shows and celebrities’ red-carpet choices — a major influence for teens who view prom as their own “big premier.” Operating on the assumption that you lack the time for such exhaustive research, we asked Fort to divulge this year’s biggest trends so you can begin creating floral designs to complement the frocks of today’s flashy fashionistas.
A SHORT STORY
“Short dresses are becoming one of the go-to styles for prom,” Fort said. This fun and flirty style also lets teens “show off a fabulous pair of shoes.” For its cover, TeenPROM featured Kendall Jenner (of “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” fame) wearing a full and flouncy short turquoise dress.
Dress Terani Couture, $318
teranicouture.com

THE CONVERTIBLE
Girls torn between the glamour of a floor-length gown and the mobility of a short frock will love this two-in-one style. “These dresses have a detachable overskirt, which is unzipped, untied or undone to reveal a short dress below,” Fort said.
Dress: Liz Fields, $498
lizfields.com

MODERN MERMAID
“The mermaid silhouette is form fitting and figure flattering,” Fort said, pointing to several actresses who wore it to the 2012 Golden Globes, including Reese Witherspoon, Sofia Vergara, Julianne Moore and Tina Fey. The latest mermaid style has a skirt that flares out just above the knee, so it’s easy to move on the dance floor.
Dress: Flirt by Maggie Sottero, $498
flirtprom.com

SHINE ON
Be prepared for some scintillating style. “Shiny and shimmery frocks rock, thanks to a multitude of sequins, rhinestones, large cut gems and mirrors,” Fort said.
Dress: La Femme, $450
lafemmefashion.com

PROM PLUMAGE
Fashion takes flight with this bird-inspired trend. “Whether it’s feather accents, full-on feathers or faux (embroidery) feathers, this gives a touch of femininity while adding a different dimension and texture,” Fort said.
Dress: Precious Formals, Inc., $320
preciousformals.com

PREVIOUS PAGE
TeenPROM's cover model, Kendall Jenner, wears a full and flouncy turquoise short Terani Couture dress for prom.

NEXT PAGE
The magazine's cover features teen models showcasing prom dresses from various designers.
ON THE WILD SIDE

The dance floor may resemble the savanna this year. “Cheetah, leopard, python and zebra all are creating uproar, sometimes in colors that never appear in nature,” Fort said.

Dress: Tony Bowls Evening, $478
> tonybowls.com

PEEK-A-BOO

“For some girls, cutouts and high side slits are always the No. 1 choice,” Fort said. Unlike the exposed shoulder styles popular in the ‘80s and ‘90s, “this season, peek-a-boo looks have become a little more daring, showing more skin with open sides and low backs. Or, they may have the illusion of a cutout using nude mesh inlays.”

Dress: Jasz Couture, $378
> jaszcouture.com

THE LAYOVER

A new look this year is a long see-through skirt worn over a very short dress. “Total fashionistas may even wear a glitzy romper under this transparent trend,” Fort said.

Dress: Claudine for Alyce, $379 each
> alyceparis.com

DOUBLE PLAY

As modeled by Charlize Theron at this year’s Golden Globes, high-low hems are still on the fashion forefront, Fort said.

Dress: Night Moves by Allure, $398 each
> nightmovesprom.com
SHOW STOPPER
A dress straight out of Cinderella is the perfect fit for girls dreaming of a fairy tale evening. The newest take on ball gowns includes “layers on layers of see-through ‘floaty’ fabric, such as organza or tulle in ruffled, full skirts flaring out from a dropped waist,” Fort said.
Dress: Dana Mathers, $478 each > danamathers.com

EMPIRE ELEGANCE
Many girls will gravitate to a Grecian goddess style. “Gowns with soft, sheer fabrics flowing from an empire waist are a perfect prom pick for any body,” Fort said.
Dress: Crush by RJ Formals, $378 > crushprom.com

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