



Photo courtesy of Sara Blakely

Sara Blakely

SPANX® Shapewear

U.S. PATENT NO. 6,276,176: Pantyhose under garment

Inducted in 2026 Born: Feb. 27, 1971

Primary Connections:

- Spanx Inc.: Founder and Executive Chairwoman, 2000-present

Education:

- Florida State University: B.S., Communications, 1993

Key Memberships/Awards:

- National Women's History Museum, Women Making History Award, 2025
- Florida Inventors Hall of Fame, 2018
- Time Magazine, The World's 100 Most Influential People, 2012
- University of Alabama, College Debate Tournament, First Place, 1993

Sara Blakely invented footless control top pantyhose and created the Spanx brand, which has revolutionized and become synonymous with shapewear. Founded with a \$5,000 personal investment, Spanx Inc. grew into a billion-dollar company. Blakely became the youngest self-made woman billionaire and a role model for aspiring entrepreneurs.



Full Bio: <https://www.invent.org/inductees/sara-blakely>

Things You Should Know:

- Blakely was born in Clearwater, Florida, in 1971.
- She studied communications at Florida State University.
- After graduating from college, she took a job selling fax machines in Florida, and later in Atlanta, where she became a national sales trainer.
- When she invented Spanx, Blakely wrote her own patent and asked her mother, an artist, to sketch the prototype for her patent application.
- A manufacturer she met in North Carolina was initially skeptical of her idea, but his daughters convinced him to work with Blakely.
- Neiman Marcus was the first store to begin selling Spanx.
- Oprah Winfrey named Spanx one of her "Favorite Things" in November 2000.
- After signing a contract with the home shopping channel QVC in 2001, within five minutes on the air, Blakely had sold 8,000 pairs of Spanx.
- Blakely founded the Red Backpack Foundation (RBF) in 2006 (formerly the Sara Blakely Foundation). The RBF is named for the backpack Blakely considered her "good luck charm" when she began building the Spanx brand.
- In 2013, Blakely signed the Giving Pledge, in which individuals commit to giving a majority of their wealth to charitable causes in their lifetime or wills.