

The **7** Deadly Sins of Style

- Seven common style mistakes men make& how to avoid them -

Written by

Antonio Centeno

4th Edition, May 2014

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Finally, use your head. Nothing in this Guide is intended to replace common sense, legal, medical or other professional advice, and is meant to inform and entertain the reader. So have fun and learn to dress sharp!

I'm going to be blunt with you..... **Before you open your mouth, people make a snap decision about you.**

The greatest men in history knew this, and from Twain to Gandhi, Churchill to Reagan, they used their personal presentation to set the stage for their message.

Too many men fail to understand that how they look is how they are perceived by others; and how we are perceived by others can have a huge effect on how successful we are at work, at home, and in life.

If you look incompetent, you will be treated as incompetent and face an uphill battle changing minds. If, however, you appear to be on top of your game, people will assume you are an A level player. Dressing smart doesn't make you intelligent, but it does give you the benefit of people **assuming** you are.

I wrote this eBook to stress the importance of paying attention to your appearance, and how a man can transform his appearance for the better.

With that, I present to you the seven deadly sins of men's style. I hope it creates in you a hunger to dress sharp and become the man you know yourself to be. And when that happens, I invite you to reach out to me and learn even more.

Sincerely,

Antonio Centeno



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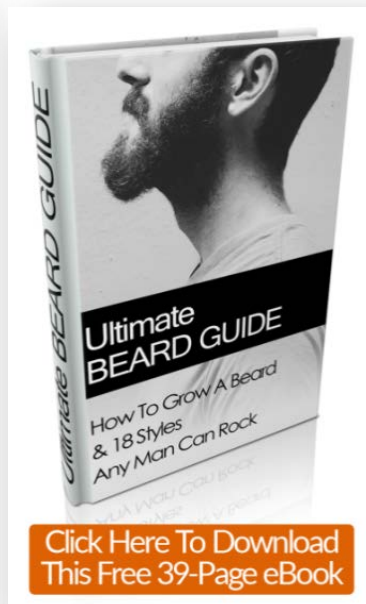
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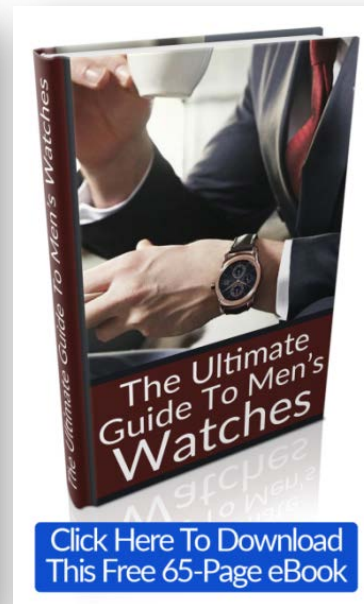
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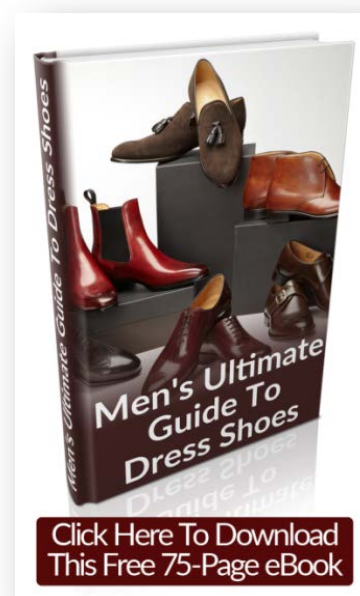
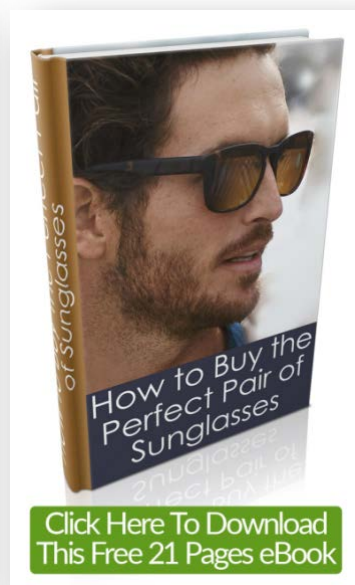
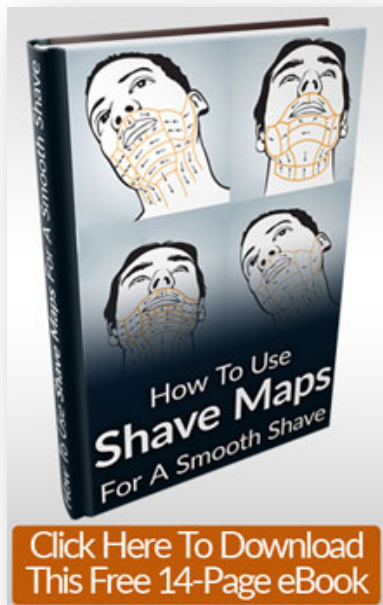
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Introduction -The Seven Deadly Sins of Style

Dressing well isn't rocket science, so why does it get written about so much?

The simple answer is that it's easy to keep creating content (and fashions for people to buy) as long as you write about the very specific things that people should be doing *right this moment* to look better. The purpose of this guide is to get away from that fashion-chasing mentality and lay out the things that will *always* be the wrong choice. Our goal is to provide you a comprehensive guide on how to avoid looking bad instead of yet another guide on a single new look or strategy.

Without beating around the bush, we've broken down seven basic mistakes that most men are guilty of at least once or twice in their life:

Sin #1 - Bad fit. Most men don't realize it, but the way their clothes hang on their body is actually the most defining aspect of their appearance.

Sin #2 - Not Dressing for the Occasion. An over- or under-dressed man makes everyone around him feel a little awkward. Know what you're getting into at various social and business events, and know how to dress for every level of formality.

Sin #3 - Mismatching Patterns. Patterns that don't go well together jar the eye. Wearing nothing but solid colors is boring. Learn how to avoid both!

Sin #4 - Mismatching Color. Forget "honey, does this tie go with..." Know what's just not going to work, avoid it, and get on with your life.

Sin #5 - Dressing Your Body Inappropriately. Some "looks" work well on certain body types, but seem ridiculous on others. Don't be tempted into a bad style just because it happens to be trendy -- you've got to know your limits.

Sin #6 - Choosing Quantity over Quality. A wardrobe stuffed full of bad clothes is no substitute for even a lean closet of garments that make you look like a million bucks. Be strategic with your purchases, and know the quality of what you're buying.

Sin #7 - Getting the Details Wrong. A well-chosen outfit can be marred -- or improved -- by details as small as the cufflinks or the pocket square. Know what details people are going to care about, and how to get them right.

Knowing and avoiding these "Seven Deadly Sins" of menswear is the fastest way to look sharp every time you step out the door. It won't matter if you've bought the latest fashion, because your wardrobe is based on the timeless rules of menswear - the classic style that's endured. You'll also wind up saving money by relying on pieces of clothing that last for years and serve equally well in different outfits and combinations rather than buying a single article for every occasion.

Of course, there's an ethos that says men shouldn't worry about dress at all. We should be judged solely on our merits and not our appearance. It's a nice idea, but scientifically unsound -- the human brain makes most of its judgments visually. We form our impression of people within a few seconds of meeting them. Later interactions might change that impression, but the brain will continue thinking that a quality dresser is a quality person.

Other men prefer to look at dressing well as an act of personal transformation: I wear the clothes of the powerful, therefore I become the powerful. Or you might choose a style that looks more responsible, or older, or younger, or more relaxed, or more artistic -- the point is that looking a particular way will help you to feel that way as well. And looking good will always translate to feeling good. It's one of those lessons that you can't teach someone until they try it for themselves, so just give it a shot and see what we mean.

Perhaps most importantly, dressing well is a habit that makes you a cleverer, more observant human being, to say nothing of a more diligent one. The self-discipline it takes to iron your own shirts when they start getting wrinkled is the same mental skill that gets you to put in those extra, boss-impressing (or subordinate-inspiring) fifteen minutes before and after work. Thinking about your clothing first thing in the morning wakes you up and puts your brain in high gear before you get out the door.

Once fine clothing becomes a habit of thought, you begin to notice it in other men as well. Be confident that others will notice as well -- once you've mastered the well-chosen jacket and the perfect tie, you've entered into a brotherhood with signs and

symbols as recognizable as the Masons', and you'll be surprised how many other dapper chaps you find yourself exchanging knowing nods with on the street.

Of course, joining that fraternity does require a touch of foreknowledge and preparation, and this guide provides the basic information you need to get started as a well-dressed man. By avoiding the fundamental "Deadly Sins" of menswear, you'll be able to craft a look that's sharper and more consistent than the trend-driven approach to fashion.

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Sin #1: Bad Fit

The first deadly sin of menswear -- and the most common -- is choosing poorly-fitted garments.

Most men in America buy suits and shirts that are between one and two sizes too large for them.

Closely-fitted clothing is viewed as stifling and uncomfortable, the product of a bygone era when individuals suffered for their style. The important thing to remember about those formal decades of the early twentieth century is that menswear was still a tailor-dominated industry; most suits were still being made to an individual's measure.

Even department stores paid in-house tailors to take the store's base model suits and adjust them for every client. Without human tailoring involved, menswear depends on general parameters of human body shape to create numerical sizes.

Any part of the body that falls outside those parameters will be pinched uncomfortably (in the case of a man too large for part of his suit) or lost in drapes of loose fabric (if the suit is sized too large).



Beyond comfort, a proper fit is simply better-looking. Good tailoring can emphasize a man's most attractive features and draw the eye away from everything else.

Different body types will seek different effects (discussed in Chapter 5), but no one is flattered by clothes that look like a loose sack, or that wrinkle and pinch tightly at the joints.

The smooth, unbroken line of a well-fitted suit or shirt is the centerpiece of a well-dressed man's appearance, and other efforts will be wasted without it.

How, then, to determine when a garment fits?

Comfort should be the first guideline -- anything uncomfortably tight is too small, especially if the fabric bunches up with the body's movements. Beyond that, tailors over the years have settled on a few basic conventions that guide flattering fits for most men:

Jacket Fit

Jackets, whether individual sportcoats or parts of suits, are primarily characterized by their overall shape, often called the silhouette.

Without delving into the history of style too far, it is sufficient to say that silhouettes usually fall somewhere between the very traditional European-style suit and the loose, unfitted "sack" suit. A more fitted suit will define



the body beneath it more clearly, while a looser one will hide it.

Most jackets in America these days are something of a compromise between the two extremes, soft and draping at the hips and shoulders but brought in a bit at the waist and chest.

Comfort is the best guide here -- a suit that constricts around your flesh when you move is too tightly-fitted, and should be looser in the constrained area. In general, you want your jacket to remain stationary as you move; the fabric should not be tugged along with your motions. If cloth billows or spreads when you move, the fit is too loose.

The movement of the jacket is also heavily influenced by the venting - the presence and number of slits running upward from the base of the jacket. While single-vented jackets (with a single slit up the middle of the back) are the cheapest to produce, and have become the default style for most manufacturers, they are also the least flattering option for most men.

An unvented jacket will usually provide the closest and smoothest fit, but bunches in the back when a man sits or puts his hands in his pockets -- these are often favored by politicians or other men who are required to stand in one place and speak, but may not suit more active men, or men whose interactions are primarily done sitting down.

For them, the double-vented jacket is ideal, with two slits up the back creating a wide square of fabric that moves with the motion of the legs beneath.

Double-vented jackets also allow a man to put his hands in his pockets without hitching the back of the coat upward, which has made them very popular in England (where putting your hands in your pockets is considered more normal and less of a social faux pas than in America).

Jacket lapels, the folded pieces of cloth that cover the chest, have varied with fashion throughout the years, but a balanced look is never unfashionable, and can keep a suit appropriate no matter what the current trend is.

Look for the outermost point of the lapel to fall halfway between the shirt collar and the end of the shoulder, or just shy of that point. On most men, the measurement works out to about 3 1/2", but there will be some variation on broader or narrower torsos. So long as the lapel is near that halfway mark, the numeric measurement is not an exact standard.

Jackets are generally longer in the back than they are in the front, which allows them to flow visually down into the trousers; at minimum, the bottom of the jacket should cover the bottom curve of the buttocks. Anything shorter will rest awkwardly on top of the buttocks and look like a tiny skirt -- the opposite of the desired effect.

There is something of an old wives' tale in menswear to the effect that the jacket should end halfway down a man's hand when his arms are resting at his side; while being somewhere in that neighborhood is visually appealing, there can be a large difference in arm lengths even between two men of the same height. Use the curve of the buttocks to determine where the jacket should fall instead.

Most errors of fit can be remedied by simply knowing the warning signs of a bad fit. If cloth bunches or pinches in any place the fit is too tight; likewise, if the cloth is loose and billowy the fit is too large.

A jacket collar is too loose if it stands off the neck with a gap between the fabric and the shirt collar. Sleeves that completely conceal the shirt beneath are too long. A half-inch of shirt fabric should show at the cuffs, allowing the buttons of the shirt cuff to be visible.

If a vest is worn, it should not touch the points of the shirt collar at the top, but should reach the waistband of the trousers at the bottom.

Shirt Fit

Unlike the jacket, which hangs along the frame and offers its own unique shape, men's dress shirts are meant to be worn as close to the body as possible regardless of your physical shape.

Like jackets, the test of the fit is first and foremost comfort -- a shirt that hangs loosely, or that balloons around the waist when tucked in is too loose.

A shirt that pinches or bunches up with movement is too tight. The soft cotton of a quality dress shirt allows a close fit to be very comfortable.

Most manufacturers offer shirts sized by both the collar and the sleeve length, which makes them somewhat easier to fit than suits.

Most humans have one arm longer than the other, making some minor adjustments to the sleeves flattering.

The "yoke," the panel across the back of the shoulders, is often made of two slightly differently-sized panels on custom shirts, and as a result the "split yoke" is generally taken as a sign of quality manufacture (although some mass-produced, untailored shirts have begun to appear with split yokes for precisely that reason).

The proper fit for a shirt is easy to judge visually: the two sides of the collar should meet neatly at the throat, with no overlap and no gap requiring the button to stretch tightly.

The collar should extend a half-inch above the collar of a suit jacket or sportcoat.

The cuffs of the sleeve should reach all the way over the joining of the hand and wrist, easily found by the two large knobs of bone on either side of it.

At the bottom, the shirt should fall four to six inches past the waistband of the trousers, giving enough extra cloth for the shirt to be tucked in.



Trouser Fit



Many men struggle with finding a good trouser fit in the dressing-room, and this is generally because they are attempting to wear the pants too low on their body.

Dress pants are cut to be worn at the waist where they can fall smoothly past the belly instead of digging under it and creating an unsightly bulge.

Wearing trousers down at the hips requires them to be belted tightly, and the extra fabric -- meant to cover the bottom of the torso -- will sag and balloon around your middle. It also requires the dress shirt to be longer so that enough fabric remains to tuck the shirt in with and that extra cloth also risks becoming loose and billowing.

Well-fitted trousers taper: they should be wider at the tops of the legs than at the knees, and wider at the knees than at the base of the legs.

The cuff (or un-cuffed bottom) of the legs should rest directly on top of the shoe, and looks best when it is wide enough to cover between half and three-quarters of the shoe's length. At the tops of the legs, the center seam of the trouser should be as close to the body as comfort permits, preventing the fabric from sagging.

As always, move in the trousers when trying them on -- if the crotch sways and billows, it needs to be brought up further. If the front of the legs wrinkles and bunches as you move, the trousers are too small (seeing if you can fit your hands into the pockets easily is also always worth testing).

Pleats are not strictly speaking an influence on fit, but they do allow the trousers to move and flex more easily, and are generally considered preferable to plain-fronted trousers. The small, vertical folds require additional cloth in the seat and thighs, which billows when worn too low, contributing to the modern misconception that pleated trousers make your bottom look bigger.

Worn high enough on the body, pleats drape in smooth, vertical lines, which actually have an overall slimming effect. They open when the fabric is stretched by sitting, preventing the fabric from pulling tight and bulging.

If you do opt for pleats, be sure the fit is loose enough that they do not pull open when you stand still -- the pleats should only change shape when you sit or bend over. Resting, they should be plain vertical lines.

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Sin # 2 – Not Dressing for the Occasion

Dress Codes, Formality, and Knowing What to Wear

The second most-common failing in most men's clothing is the simple error of showing up for an event either over- or under-dressed. The former is harder to do than the latter, but still awkward -- a tuxedo will stand out anywhere that isn't black-tie, and a matched suit looks strange outside of formal business settings or particularly dressy social occasions. Conversely, wearing casual trousers and an informal, patterned jacket or no jacket at all can be a serious disadvantage in high-stakes (and high-formality) dealings.

The first and easiest way to be sure of wearing the right thing is to follow the dress code, if one is offered -- most social occasions will include this information in an invitation. Understanding the basic terminology makes wardrobe choices significantly easier:

White Tie

Rarely seen on modern invitations, white tie is the most formal of dress codes. It includes tailcoats, piped trousers, and white waistcoats, and is prohibitively expensive for most men. Unless you happen to attend jet-set dinners or work for very large charities, you're unlikely to ever face the white tie code.

Black Tie

Black tie or evening dress means that a black or midnight blue dinner jacket and matching trousers is expected.

A silk bow tie is the only appropriate neckwear (matched to the lapel facings) and patent leather pumps or highly-polished Oxfords are the only shoes that should be worn. The shirt should be white, French-cuffed, and fastened with studs.



Black Tie Optional

Black tie optional is frequently used for ceremonies where the participants will be formally dressed, but want to spare their guests the necessity of owning or renting a tuxedo.

A solid, dark suit with a dark tie and a white undershirt is perfectly appropriate at these events, but anything patterned is too informal. Once again, shoes should be unadorned black Oxfords.

Semi-Formal or Business Dress

Semi-formal or business dress should not be confused with casual or business-casual; a suit is still expected.

The fabric should be dark and patterning kept to a minimum, and the shirt should be unobtrusive and light-colored. A tie is necessary, as are simple, conservative shoes and belt.

Business-Casual or Dress-Casual

Business-casual or dress-casual implies that a tie in particular is optional, and in some circles also indicates that a jacket can be omitted or replaced with a sweater, vest, or similar garment.

The shirt must still be collared, and dress trousers are expected. Any leather dress shoe is appropriate.

Casual

Casual is not anything-goes; any event that bothered to provide a dress code still expects attendees to look neat and well-presented.

However, jeans and casual shirts including polo or golf shirts are appropriate, and dress shorts may also be considered within bounds in hot weather.

Leather sandals, moccasins, or boat shoes may be worn.

When no specific code is given, it may be best to err on the side of conservative dress and wear clothing that can be adjusted if necessary -- a suit that proves to be too formal can be dressed down by removing the tie, or the jacket of a casual outfit can be set aside to leave you with a simple collared shirt and trousers.

When more casual codes are in place, resist the temptation to throw on an old polo and a pair of khakis; the result will be looking like every other schlub in the room.

Practice the art of dressing up while dressing down instead: wear light, loose sportcoats with active patterns and softer colors to look casual without losing the flattering shape of a well-cut jacket.

In the summer heat, lightweight materials can keep trousers and long-sleeved shirts a viable option -- and there's always the American classic of the seersucker suit, the very epitome of Southern casual.

Overall, it's easy to avoid being the wrong-dressed man if you keep your wardrobe versatile enough to conform to different dress codes and pay attention to expectations at public events.

And in general, remember that it's always safer to be overdressed than under, since clothes can be removed but not added (without a trip home, at least).

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Sin #3: Mismatching Patterns

Somewhat more complicated than following a dress code, the art of choosing the right pattern for both your build and for different degrees of formality is another common area of failing for men.

Some men mismatch patterns to jarring effect, while others try to avoid the issue by wearing only solid colors, neither of which takes advantage of one of the defining features of clothing.

Ditch the shyness, learn the basics, and make pattern a functioning part of your wardrobe -- not just something that happens to be there, but something that makes a statement about you.

Levels of Pattern Formality

First off, understand that different patterns are acceptable in different social situations.

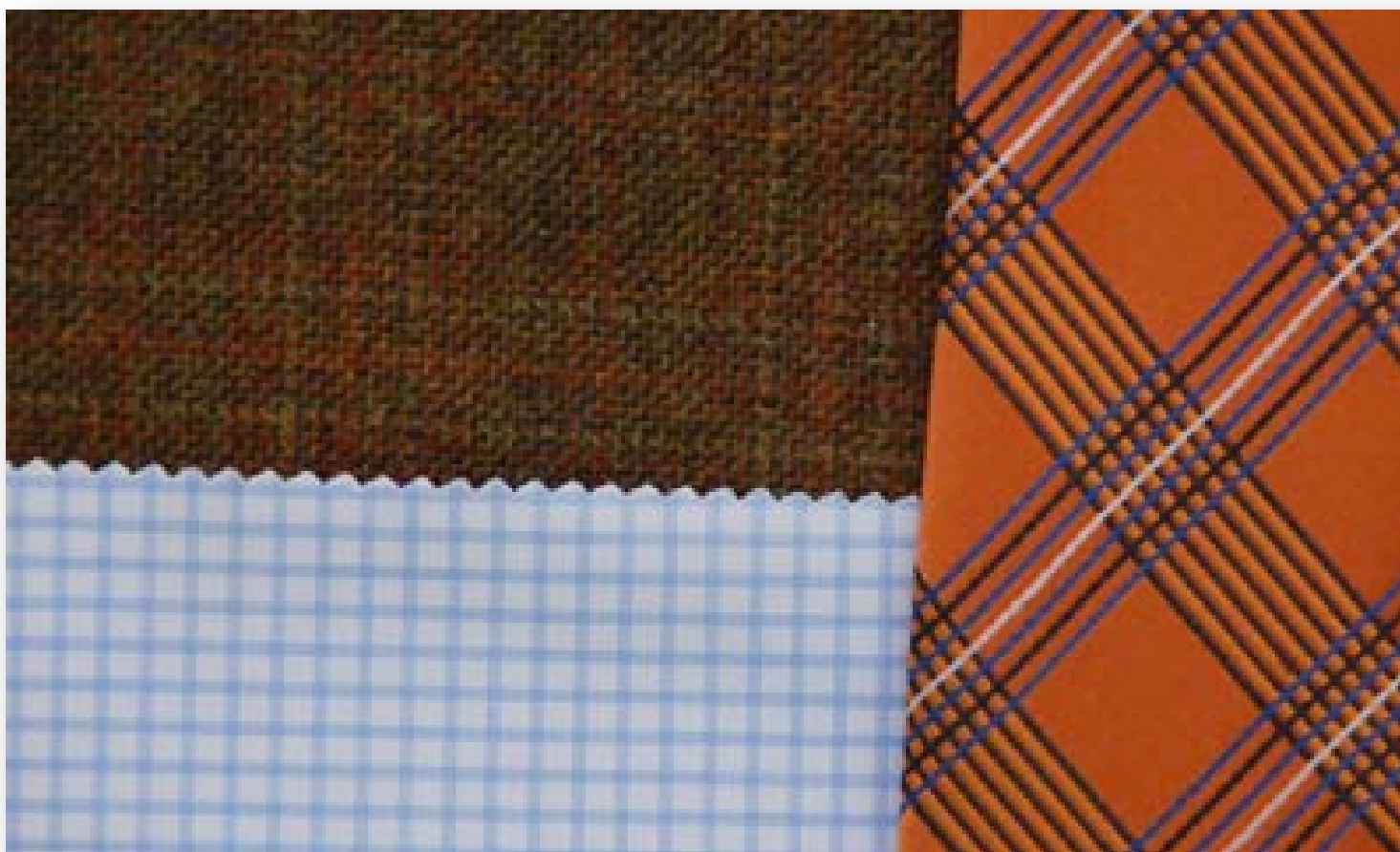
Different cultures put slightly different emphasis on the importance of pattern --



what might raise eyebrows at a charity dinner in New York City will likely go unnoticed at an art gallery opening in Wichita -- but overall, the more obvious a pattern is the less formal the garment is considered to be.

Solid colors are the most formal end of the scale, while overstated patterns like paisleys and polka-dots are so casual as to be almost entirely absent from menswear.

Remembering the basic break-down of dress codes from the last chapter, you can generally assume that only solid colors are appropriate for formal or semi-formal occasions, modest pinstriping becomes acceptable at the business level, and bolder patterns should only be worn in dress-casual or casual situations.



This applies to jackets, trousers, and shirts; ties should also be kept solid at the upper levels of formality, but have a somewhat wider array of options in the more casual strata.

Matching and Contrasting

The most basic rule of patterning is never to match the scale of the pattern from one piece of clothing to the next.

That is to say, if you wear a suit with narrow pinstripes, neither your tie nor your shirt should feature the same.

A broad chalk-stripe on the shirt and solid tie or a solid shirt with a broadly-striped tie would be a better fit, and so on. People with a shallow understanding of clothing may extend this rule and simply say that you shouldn't wear differing patterns, but they are missing the point -- a shirt covered in small, delicate crosshatching is not inappropriate with a broadly striped suit, nor with a "figure" tie featuring a repeated crest or monogram.

Colored Patterns vs. Textured

When choosing patterns, be aware that they come from two different sources: the contrast of different colors in the dye or printing of the fabric, and the texture created by its physical weave.

The latter is much subtler than the former, but equally important; there's a reason that no one puts pinstripes on a herringbone tweed suit.

Patterns created by colors are more noticeable and eye-catching, and therefore somewhat less versatile. They should be used to make a bold statement, but not in very formal situations, or in situations where you are expected to take a more supporting social role and avoid attracting attention.

Examples of these include most striping, checks, "windowpane" patterns of broad gridlines, and plaids and printed figures. Unless done in very muted colors, or in colors that are very similar to one another, these sorts of pattern will be the centerpiece of an outfit, so use them sparingly.

Patterns formed by the texture of the cloth are more understated, and can be used more freely than bold prints. Many solid-color garments are made more eye-catching with a textured weave; the repeating chevrons of herringbone is probably the most famous example, giving the classic gray tweed sports coat a dash of detail and breaking up its visual impact.

Wear clothes with textured patterns to support your ensemble while keeping it from being just another set of single-color clothes, or where the added depth of the weave serves a practical purpose -- woven wool ties, for example, hold heavy knots better than silk.

Types of Pattern

Assuming that patterns are going to be worn, remember the basics -- larger, bolder patterns are less formal than small or understated ones, and the scale of the patterns in your various garments should differ noticeably.

Within those parameters, fashion has produced a handful of staples that will always serve well in a gentleman's wardrobe:

Solids

Solids are the obvious first choice for formal or business occasions, and are often preferred when a garment is not meant to be the centerpiece of an outfit.

If you have a fine suit, wearing it with a simple, muted shirt in a solid color allows it to shine. It is possible to have a visible pattern



even within the realm of solid colors, if the weave is textured, which will make the garment less formal but more eye-catching.

Stripes

Stripes refer to vertical striping, and can run the gamut from classic pin striping to the equally-sized blue and white stripes of the traditional seersucker suit.

Pinstripes are very narrow stripes, usually white or gray, against a solid background. As stripes widen, the formality of the garment decreases, particularly in the case of a pattern with more than one color of stripe.

Modest striping is a good way to liven up an undershirt, particularly one worn with an otherwise solid, muted outfit.

Checks

Checks are even less formal than stripes, but still appropriate for casual suits, and completely at home in a casual jacket or a dress shirt.

Plaids are the most familiar example, and the gray-dominated Glen check is still a staple of business-casual menswear. The word "check" can also refer to windowpane styles of pattern, which are created by intersecting vertical and horizontal lines set apart from one another in a broad, regular grid.

Windowpane suits are uncommon, and even jackets are not a routine sight, but small windowpanes have become quite widespread in dress shirts and can match well with a striped or solid suit.

Conversely, muted plaids do still make occasional appearances in suits and jackets, but plaid shirts are generally considered strictly the purview of lumberjacks and farmers (or at least country gentlemen on the weekend).

Figure

Figure pattern is a catch-all term for any repeating design or emblem, encompassing paisley, polka-dots, and more.

Generally reserved for ties, there are some dress shirts with printed figure patterns; these generally work best if the colors are muted and similar and the design reasonably subtle.

Neckties, on the other hand, can feature quite bold patterns when paired with subdued shirts and suits -- the limit is really only how eye-catching a man is really willing to let his tie become. Of course, as with all things, the bolder the pattern, the less formal the look.

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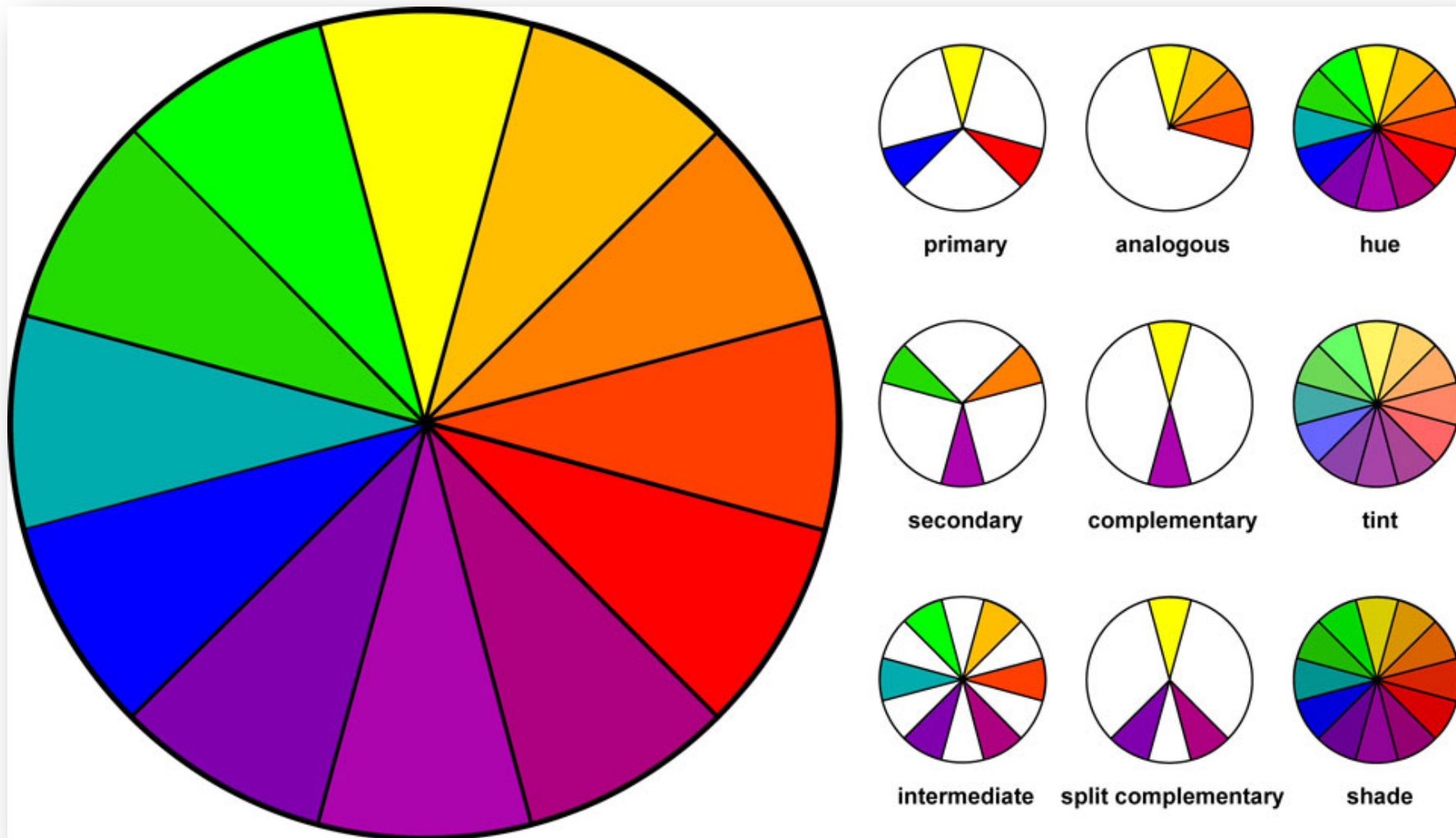
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Sin #4: Mismatching Colors

Color goes hand in hand with pattern. Choosing one well does no good if the other is mismatched. Where the guides for pattern are largely based on formality, color is often a purely aesthetic choice (although certain social situations and dress codes call for specific colors of attire, as noted in Sin #2: Not Dressing for the Occasion). Many matching errors come from following bad advice -- color choice is particularly plagued with old truisms of the fashion industry, "no white after Labor Day"



and so forth. Most of these have roots in good, solid advice, and may even still be applicable in the majority of situations, but color selection is a skill much better served by a little understanding than by a lot of rules.

Understand the Color Wheel

There's a whole branch of science devoted to colors and different ways of producing them down at the fundamental, wavelength-based level, but for dressing neatly you can generally get away with the same basic guide people have been using since the mid-seventeenth century: the color wheel.

The color wheel is an easy reference for the relationship between different hues. Generally speaking, outfits should be assembled along the more symmetrical breakdowns of the color wheel:

Complementary colors are directly across the wheel from one another -- red and green, for example. These colors make a bold, eye-catching contrast with one another, but do not look jarringly mismatched.

Triad colors refer to three colors that are equidistant from one another, making a sort of Y-shape on the wheel: red, blue and yellow are triads with one another. This is the most balanced approach to color, and can look very studiously neutral in lighter shades.

Analogous colors border one another, as in the case of red, red-orange and orange. These are used to create color-coordinated outfits, and often rely on darker or lighter shades as well.

Neutral colors are the non-colors -- white (which is the combination of all colors into plain light) and black (which is the absence of color altogether), or the shades of gray between them. Adding white or black to a hue on the color wheel lightens or darkens it without altering its position, allowing infinite variations of each color.

Obviously, one can easily put together an outfit that is none of these things -- blue blazer, yellow-green shirt, orange tie; gray suit, yellow shirt, green tie, and so on. These combinations are generally jarring to the eye, which is why most designers use the color wheel as their basic cheat-sheet for color schemes.

Understand Complexions

Assuming you stay within the most flattering relationships from the color wheel, the base hues of your clothing should never be too jarring. There is still room for error, however, if your clothes match badly with your complexion; the color of your skin, hair, and even eyes will have an effect on which shades you should select. Issues of brightness and darkness are particularly crucial in choosing clothing suited to your complexion, since they determine the amount of contrast your clothing offers.

High-contrast men are people whose natural complexion is characterized by vividly different colors -- fair skin and dark hair is a common example of a high-contrast complexion. Brightly-colored eyes can also heighten a man's natural contrast.

Since these men are naturally characterized by contrast, they want to seek it in their clothing as well; dark suits with light shirts and strongly-colored ties are the best choices. Complementary colors from the wheel will provide the strongest contrast, or triad colors can be a good option for the basis of a suit-shirt-tie combination.

Low-contrast men are the opposite, sporting hair that is similar to their skin (or no hair at all, which removes most of the contrast from any man's complexion). Very strongly-contrasted outfits can be overpowering on low-contrast men, who do best in analogous colors or even varying shades (degrees of lightness) of the same hue. Pattern, particularly from textured weaves, is a



good way for low-contrast men to add variety to their outfits, since overdoing it on the colors will be unflattering.

Medium-contrast men don't necessarily have a stark difference between their hair and skin, but don't blend seamlessly from one to the next either.

Brown skin and black hair, or tan skin with lighter brown hair are examples of medium-contrast. The key to outfits for medium-contrast men is simply avoiding extremes -- complementary colors in very bright shades will be too contrasting, while muted analogous colors in very similar shades of brightness will look washed-out. Triads are a good choice for medium-contrast men, since they offer good balance without being too aggressively different.

Matching vs. Contrasting

Even within a single garment, a man is often faced with the decision between matched or contrasted colors -- is a blue shirt better with fine white windowpane lines, or should the lines be a light blue instead?

The above advice on complexion can be one deciding factor; for the rest, remember that brighter colors and stronger contrasts grab the eye more, while muted hues and patterns worked in similar colors are easier for the eye to travel over.

As with all menswear choices, strive for balance -- if you are wearing a suit in an unusual style, you will generally want to opt for more matched colors, while higher contrast will make an otherwise-unremarkable outfit stand out in the crowd. Bigger, more distinct patterns require less contrast to make them apparent, and so on.

Lighting and Seasons

The old advice about wearing specific colors in specific seasons isn't simply arbitrary tradition -- it's based on an idea, albeit a heavily Eurocentric one, that the seasons provide predictable lighting, and that a man can dress to take advantage of each one in turn. Winter is predominantly grey and white, making dark, rich colors desirable, while the emerging colors of spring require muted pastels to keep an outfit from appearing garish. Summer is bright, to say nothing of hot, making light colors (and fabrics) ideal, and the riot of colors that deciduous trees produce in the fall is nicely contrasted by reserved earth tones. Since these conventions may or may not work depending on the climate a man finds himself in, it is generally better to simply

say "keep your surroundings in mind" and leave it at that -- avoid looking too bright for the landscape you're likely to find yourself in.

An interesting footnote on issues of lighting and color choice is that very few men are flattered by black suits when under fluorescent tube lights, an industrial staple of nearly all buildings; this is one of the reasons that charcoal gray is seen as a better business suit choice than black. Unless a man has a very dark complexion, his skin will stand out from a black suit and take on the greenish-purple hue of the lighting.

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Sin #5: Dressing Your Body Type Inappropriately

No, we're not talking about Mickey Mouse ties when we say "dressing inappropriately." The issue is this -- every man's body is a different shape.

Therefore, every style should be different, and tailored to the specific body.

Mass manufacturers, however, need to be able to sell as many of the same product as possible and so men's style is often categorized by "fashions" that everyone should supposedly wear, regardless of their size and shape.

As a result, many men find themselves encouraged into buying unflattering clothing that makes them look too short, too tall, too slim or too broad, and so on.

Understand how clothing choices affect the appearance of your body, and only choose clothing well-suited to your general physique.

The Tall Man





Tall men -- anyone over 6'3" or so -- want to avoid appearing too loom, which is mostly caused by the viewer's eye traveling further up than habit has taught it to prepare for.

Anything that breaks the eye's journey up the tall man's body will be flattering, so horizontal lines and other side-to-side elements like jacket pockets and belts are desirable.

Very narrow vertical stripes are the biggest no-no, since this simply speed the eye's journey upward.

Tailoring can also help size individual elements to be more flattering -- dropping the back of the jacket further in the rear can help shorten the lines of a tall man's legs, while larger lapels and pocket flaps can make the front look more balanced and proportional.

The Short Man

Short men face the opposite problem, and want clothing that helps the eye travel smoothly up their body and into the air above them, giving an added sense of height that helps far more than a pair of chunky-heeled shoes.

Vertical striping, suspenders instead of a belt, and upward-sweeping "peak" lapels all help draw the viewer's gaze up. Suits are almost always more flattering than unmatched trousers and jackets, which simply divide the man's visual impression in half.

The trousers should be worn high and cut as high in the crotch as possible, lengthening the impression of the legs.

The Large Man

Heavy men are best slimmed by solid colors (vertical lines, while slimming, are very obvious when the shape of the body bends them into curves instead of straight up-and-down lines).

A very deep "V" in the front of the jacket helps make the chest look longer and thinner.

Trousers worn at the natural waist elongate the legs and fall more smoothly over a broad stomach, and should certainly be worn with suspenders -- a belt simply draws the eye to the midsection.

The Thin Man

Thin men benefit from adding bulk, but can look swallowed by extreme additions like a double-breasted suit or a vest -- they are generally best served by small details that add fabric to a garment, such as thick cuffs, trouser pleats, and pockets with flaps rather than the narrow slits of "jetted" pockets.

Good garment fit will also help reduce the impression of slimness -- remember the guidelines from Chapter 1; the shirt collar should be snug against the skin, and the cuffs of the shirt should be tight enough that they cannot be slipped off while buttoned.

No man should limit himself to a single cut and pattern for all his dress clothing -- dress codes alone would make this impractical -- so body shape should be treated as a set of loose guidelines rather than hard and fast restrictions.



That said, some fashions will simply never work for certain body types. Know what to avoid, and never let an advertising campaign or a hot fashion tip tempt you into a garment that is completely unsuited to your physique.

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Sin # 6 - Buy Quality, NOT Quantity

Anyone can look like a million bucks if they have a million bucks, but what's a Joe on a budget to do?

The prevailing wisdom to get as much for your dollar as possible is misleading here -- men are better-served by getting the most *quality* for their dollar possible than by buying the most *items* of clothing.

While other errors are mostly made out of carelessness, this is one that's often heavily-calculated.

Custom tailoring (also called "bespoke") and good materials can easily push the price of a single suit up to double or triple the price of an off-the-rack garment from a department store label.

It's easy to assume that no difference in quality will make a single suit worth the three that you could buy in its place -- but the catch is, a bad-looking suit isn't a useful investment.

It doesn't matter how much less it cost than a good suit if it doesn't make you look *good*.



No one should pay money to look bad, or even to look passably like the rest of the herd. And, as mentioned earlier, off-the-rack clothing tends to be awkwardly-fitted in at least a few places; for most men, this leads to the general impression that dress clothing is uncomfortable.

Even on a tight budget, a man is better-served by owning a few well-fitted suits and shirts than by owning a closet full of uncomfortable and unflattering ones. If custom-made clothing is truly unaffordable, skilled tailors can still achieve comfortable fits by adjusting department (or even thrift) store garments -- it can be easy to spend more on the fit of a coat than you did on the actual cloth, if you have a good nose for bargains.

Regardless of how you come by it, spend as much of your clothing budget as possible on quality of garment, not on adding new items to the wardrobe. Most men can get by just fine in life with five to ten dress shirts (as long as they do their laundry reasonably frequently), and only a few professions still demand a different, business-formal suit every day.

Understand Fabrics and Determining Raw Material Quality

A comprehensive knowledge of textiles isn't needed for buying clothes, and if you're having your clothes made for you, the tailor hopefully has that information already.

But be aware of your options -- different climates and professions will call for different clothing material, depending on your physical and stylistic needs.

Wool is the classic suit material, and still unmatched by man-made synthetics. It drapes beautifully over the body, holds heat and resists wetness well, and is surprisingly easy to care for outside of its aversion to machine washing.

Different finenesses are available, with the coarsest making suitable heavy winter clothes and the finest being too delicate for regular wear; most menswear falls somewhere in-between, with a medium-fine "three-season" wool being the most common.

The exact measure of the fabric's weight will differ from one manufacturer to the next, but when looking for a quality wool seek smoothness and softness of surface (but not slickness), even thickness throughout the cloth, and freedom from tangles or bunching in the weave.

Cotton is king for dress shirts, being the lightest and most breathable fiber readily available for mass production. Look for shirts made from long-fiber or long-staple strains of cotton -- Egyptian is probably the most common; American Prima and Sea Island cottons are also widely used in making high-quality dress shirts.

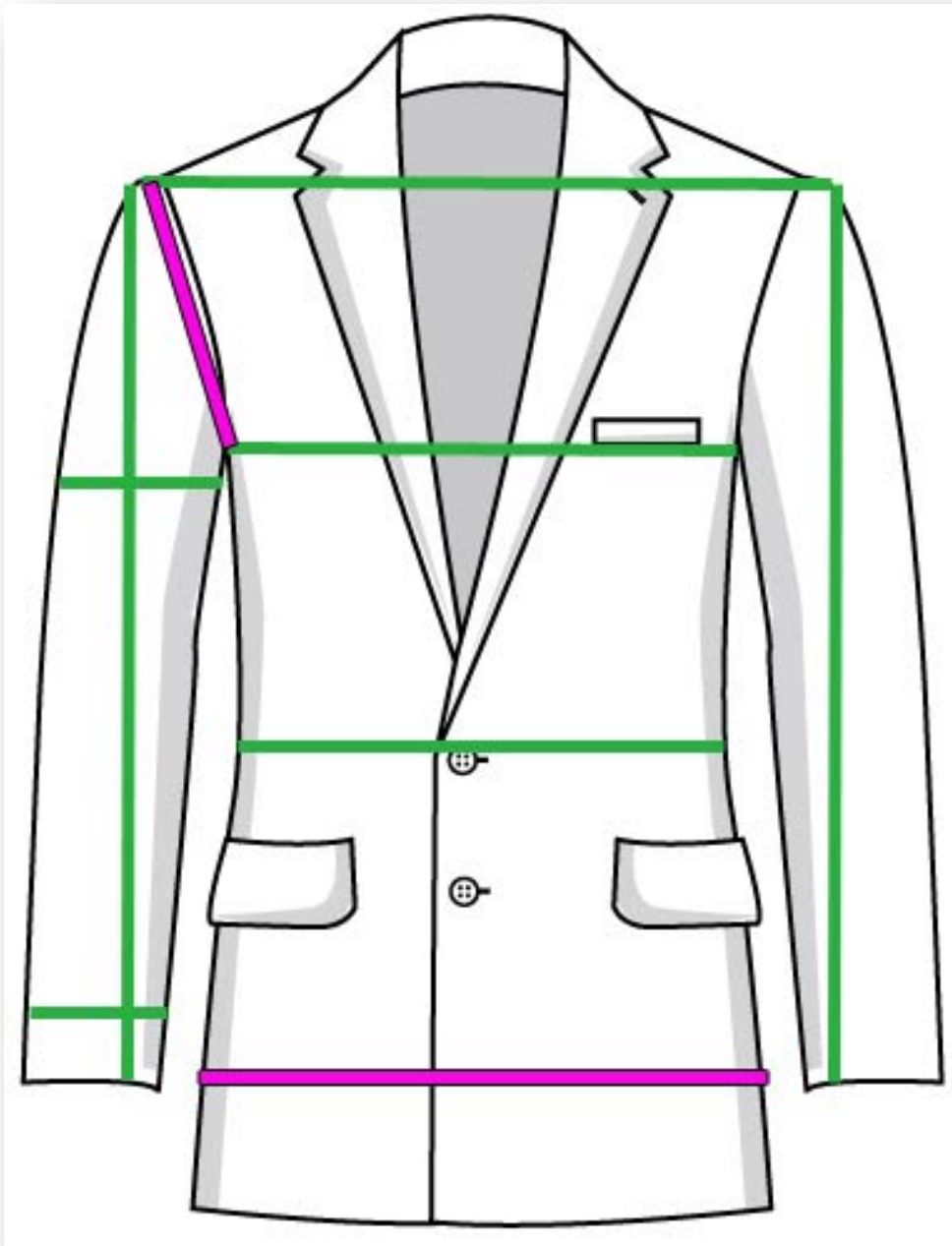
These fabrics are softer and more resilient than cheaper cloths made from short-fiber cottons.

Some manufacturers blend cotton with synthetic fibers to make a glossier surface, or to help resist wrinkling, but the resulting blend is less breathable and will be uncomfortable in hot or humid weather.

Others may use a sprayed treatment to make cotton shirts wrinkle-free; be careful of ironing these shirts or drying them at high temperatures, as the treatment may react badly to heat.



Untreated, 100% cotton dress shirts will likely remain the highest-quality option for a long time, and occasional ironing is a relatively small price to pay for the comfort and appearance of the fabric.



Synthetics appear in all manner of menswear: blended with cotton in shirts, with wool in suits, and sometimes even worn on their own (as in the case of brightly-colored polyester shirts).

Their properties may vary, but they tend to be less resilient and less breathable than natural fibers, becoming brittle and fraying at high or low temperatures and trapping sweat close to the body.

This is not to say that anything with synthetic fibers in it is automatically low-quality clothing; many top-line garments use a bit of rayon for stretch or polyester for brighter, smoother coloring.

Simply be aware of the fibers purpose -- in small quantities, it likely serves a specific function, while large percentages of man-made fibers indicates a cost-saving measure that may not have taken comfort or appearance into consideration.

Silk bears mentioning as an occasionally-seen lining for suits. Here, the more commonly-used man-made fiber is actually the superior option -- silk, while light and smooth, wrinkles and folds more easily, and is prone to collecting static energy and clinging to the wearer.

A more functional but now uncommon use for silk is as the fronting of a particularly elaborate waistcoat, usually with a decorative pattern printed or screened on it. It also makes a superior necktie, and is still in quite common use in that role.

Understanding Quality Build

Not all suits are created equal, even top brand selections made of good materials.

Both the skill of the tailor and his or her methods affect the final appearance of an article of clothing just as much as the quality of the fabric. Good wool or fine cotton is worth substantially less if it has been assembled in a slipshod manner -- and there are, unfortunately, less-than-masterful tailors who work in good-quality fabric.



Knowing how to check the garment's construction yourself can help avoid paying top-shelf prices for a middling good suit or shirt.

Men's suits are fundamentally hollow -- two layers of wool make the shape of the jacket, with a gap in between.

The most traditional construction is a shaped canvas of horsehair beneath the wool shell, but more recent manufacturing has seen the canvas replaced with a synthetic lining that fuses to the wool.

A "canvassed" suit holds its shape extremely well and resists sagging, while a "fused" suit may start out too stiff and eventually begin to slump and lose shape.

Since canvassed suits are substantially more

expensive to produce, many manufacturers offer "half-canvassed" jackets that use a fused lining below the chest and lapels. You can usually tell a canvassed suit by rubbing a bit of the wool between a thumb and forefinger; if you can feel a third layer sliding between the sides of the suit, there is a canvas.

The best men's clothing will also be fully-functional. Suit cuffs that button, functioning lapels that can be closed across the chest on sportcoats, and pocket flaps that tuck in smoothly for a jetted look are all marks of good tailoring.

The closeness of the stitching, where visible, is another good indicator of quality -- and if stitching is visible anywhere that it shouldn't be, the garment is automatically suspect. Look closely at buttonholes, shirt collars, and other visible stitching to see how closely the threads have been sewn.

Selecting a Tailor

Whether your clothes are being constructed from scratch or adjusted from an existing garment, you are eventually putting your image in the hands of another when you employ a tailor.

As in any profession, there will be a wide range of skills; for anything more than a simple repair stitch or button attachment; make sure you are working with someone who falls toward the upper end of the scale.

Be cautious of recommendations, particularly from people with differently-shaped bodies or different clothing needs (and obviously from women, whose tailors require completely different skills).

The best option is often to simply use a phone book or the internet to create a list of nearby tailors and begin calling (or better still, calling on) each of them in turn.

Have a few basic questions in mind -- it isn't rude to ask what a tailor would do to meet a specific need that you foresee arising frequently, and someone who does take offense at it is probably not someone you want to have to have regular business dealings with.

Be confident that the tailor will understand your stylistic desires and work to meet them, rather than relying on what he or she has been taught is "customary" for men -- with many tailors today coming from countries all over the world, there can be an incredible diversity in understandings of what a "proper" fit is.

If possible, look at a few examples of the tailor's work, even just whatever pieces happen to be in progress when you visit the shop.

The overall condition of the store can also be telltale -- it's a clothing shop, so a certain amount of fabric sitting around is understandable, but disorganized clutter could indicate long wait times for your garments at the very least.

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Sin #7: Getting the Details Wrong

The devil is often in the details, and it's always tragic when someone ruins an otherwise-sharp outfit by getting something simple and small wrong, or forgetting it entirely.

Be sure to run over the details of your outfit before you leave the house -- working from the feet up or the head down can often be helpful; we've used the latter approach here:

Headwear is one of those highly personal things that there aren't good universal guidelines for.

Nonetheless, people seem to have a real knack for choosing the wrong hat, so try to at least make sure the colors work with the rest of your outfit (remember your color wheel again here) and the shape of the hat goes well with the shape of your face -- if you have a narrow face, avoid a narrow, sharply-peaked hat; if your face is round, stay away from bowlers and other rounded crowns that turn your head into a beach ball.

Formality is also worth keeping in mind; only stiff, felt hats should be worn with business or formal wear. Soft caps and leather hats are more casual, and should be worn with casual clothes.





Neckties can be tied in several different styles, and you should choose whichever flatters your face best.

Men with large heads or broad faces will want a solid knot to support them, with the full Windsor being the timeless best choice; narrow-faced or small men may want something like the slim, triangular four-in-hand.

A small dimple should rest directly below the point of the knot, centered in the middle of the fabric. This lifts the tie off the chest slightly, giving it body and an attractive drape.

The Pocket Square

Pocket squares are an often-overlooked touch that can set a well-dressed man apart from the crowd on their own.

They are an individual article of clothing, and should not match the tie or anything else in your ensemble, but they should work with the overall color scheme and not distract from the ensemble as a whole.

While stylish, and often entrancing when first introduced to a man's wardrobe, they are an accent and not a defining "look" in their own right.

The Boutonnière

Boutonnieres are another underused stylistic flourish, partly because of their association with large, formal occasions and rented tuxes (weddings, your high school prom, etc.) and partly because they only last a few hours.

Like pocket-squares, however, they are a stylistic flourish that sets a man who chooses his wardrobe apart from a man who wears suits because he has to.

Boutonnieres should always be worn through the buttonhole on the lapel -- if your lapel doesn't have a working buttonhole, you shouldn't wear a boutonniere.

Carnations, gardenias, and blue cornflowers are the most commonly-worn flowers, but anything in the same general size is appropriate. A good florist will usually have a selection ready to hand, but don't underestimate the carefree effect of fresh-picked garden or wildflowers if you have access to them!

Avoid poppies except on days of remembrance like Memorial Day or Armistice Day, as they are a widely-recognized sign of respect for fallen military members.

Male Jewelry

Jewelry is something best kept to an understated minimum, since it distracts from the head-to-toe effect of a good outfit and draws the eye to a specific point instead.

The exception to any jewelry rules is the wedding band -- as a specific and lifelong symbol of commitment, the band may always be worn, and need not match other jewelry or decorations.



Other than the wedding ring, watches are probably the most common male adornment, and in many cases hardly count as jewelry at all.

There are no fixed rules about styles of band, materials of construction, or face design, so simply understand that a simpler watch is more formal, and that anything very large and bright will usually be regarded as gaudy and perhaps a bit feminine.

Cufflinks on shirts with French cuffs are the other common male adornment, and often invite very close scrutiny -- among men who wear them, they are one of those strange touches that can make a disproportionately strong impression, so be aware that some individuals will take careful note of your choice and judge you based on it.

Earrings and rings (outside of the wedding band, or occasionally a fraternal insignia or class ring) are generally seen as unneeded ostentation, particularly in more conservative circles, and should likely be avoided except as an occasional and deliberately casual gesture.

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Conclusion&Summary

Seven basic tips later, most men should now be able to [create a functional wardrobe with confidence](#) -- and without reliance on store clerks and advertisers (who have a vested interest in selling you anything, good-looking or not) or on friends and relatives (who are often clueless). To recap:

The first Deadly Sin is a bad fit. Garments that are too loose sag and billow; clothes that are too tight are uncomfortable to wear and bunch up unattractively. Knowing the basic guidelines for fit in suits, trousers, and shirts is the key.

Dressing inappropriately is the second Deadly Sin. Understanding what is meant by different dress codes is the first half of avoiding this mistake. Knowing what occasions call for what dress is the second half. A flexible wardrobe will help on occasions with less precise dress codes.

The third Deadly Sin is mismatching your patterns. Remember to mix the scale of the patterns. An understanding of the different levels of formality that patterns offer can help you select the right ones for specific occasions or outfits.

Mismatching colors is the fourth Deadly Sin. The color wheel is your secret weapon here. Know which relationships between colors look good, and use varying lightness and darkness to create variety rather than straying from those guidelines.

Dressing inappropriately for your specific body is the fifth Deadly Sin -- and in many cases is a sin of pride. Be realistic about your figure, and dress in ways that flatter it. Trying to wear fashions meant for men of a very different shape is just setting yourself up for embarrassment, so know what the classic styles for your physique are.

The sixth Deadly Sin is prioritizing quantity over quality when buying clothing. Knowing the signs of good clothing is the key to avoiding this sin, so familiarize yourself with the signs of good materials and manufacture. One flattering piece of clothing is more valuable than any number of mediocre options in the closet, so choose with precision rather than thriftiness.

The last Deadly Sin of menswear is missing the details. The easiest way to avoid this sin is to keep your outfits simple and avoid unnecessary ornamentation. When you do wear a personal adornment of some kind, be sure you understand the conventions that govern it. Ensemble details are an excellent way to express your personal style.

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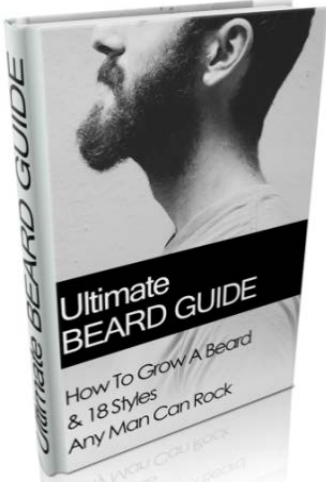
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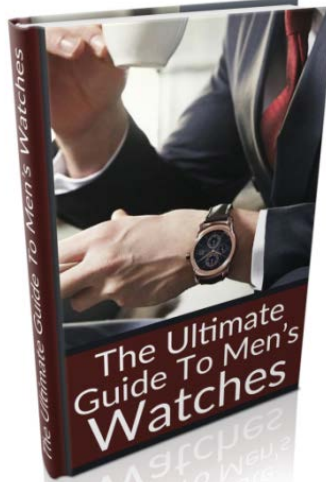
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