

## CHECKLIST: HOW TO BUY A DRESS SHIRT

### Step 1: Figure Your Size

If you already know your dress shirt size, you can skip this step. If not, most dress shirts are sized with a neck/sleeve pair of numbers, which you can calculate this way:

Measure the circumference of your neck. Take the measurement low on the neck, where the collar of a shirt sits, and add 1/4" to the measurement for breathing room.

Round your neck measurement up to the nearest half-inch. Off-the-rack shirts won't be sized any more precisely than that.

Record your collar size: \_\_\_\_\_

Measure the sleeve length with your arm held lightly at your side. Start the tape measure at nape of the neck and measure all the way down the top/outside of the arm to the end of the wrist.

Round your sleeve measurement to the nearest inch.

Record your sleeve size: \_\_\_\_\_

The two numbers you have recorded will be your ready-to-wear shirt size. Most are listed with the neck size first, and many give a short range of sleeve lengths, so a typical tag might read something like "15 1/2 32-33," for a neck size of fifteen and a half inches and a sleeve length of around thirty-two or thirty-three inches.

Men buying custom shirts may want to use a more detailed measurement guide that takes waist, chest, and additional measurements into account, such as the one at [A Tailored Suit](#).

### Step 2: Identify the Shirt You Want

#### Select a fabric:

- o Oxford — a simple, sturdy weave with light bumps in its surface
- o Pinpoint or royal oxford — a smoother, lighter oxford (more expensive)
- o Poplin — a smooth surface with a light, loose weave
- o Herringbone — a textured weave with distinct "V" shapes
- o Broadcloth — a smooth, tight, high-quality weave (often expensive)
- o Seersucker — light, bumpy, summer-weight cloth (casual)

There are many more dress shirt fabrics available, but these are the most common. Feel free to explore other options — these are a good starting place.

#### Select a collar style

- o Button-down — sturdy but casual; not appropriate for business formality
- o Point — the basic turndown shirt collar
- o Spread — a wider-spread point collar, with the points more than 90 degrees apart
- o Club — an uncommon style of rounded collar, rather than pointed
- o Mandarin — a stiff collar that does not turn down
- o Pin — a point collar held closed by a separate metal pin; only worn with ties
- o Tab — a point collar held closed with tabs under the collar; only worn with ties.

Select a cuff style

- o Single barrel — the most typical style, with a plain, buttoning cuff
- o Double French — A doubled-over style sealed with cufflinks rather than a button
- o Double barrel — An uncommon doubled-over style with built-in buttons
- o Single French — Single cuff sealed with cufflinks; rare outside of formal (tuxedo) shirts

      Select a color/pattern

- o Plain white — highest standard of business formality
- o White with light stripes/check — typical business formality
- o Light-colored solids — relaxed business wear
- o Bright solids or vivid patterns — casual/social wear only

      Select a monogram if desired/offered

The combination of fabric, collar, cuff, and color/pattern should narrow your shirt choices down nicely. You're much better-prepared for shopping if you can tell salespeople that you want "a blue-and-white striped poplin shirt with a button-down collar and normal barrel cuffs" than if you just say "I need a dress shirt."

      Step 3: Pick Your Source

      Identify the kind of tailoring and construction you want:

- o Bespoke (completely custom made — most expensive option)
- o Made-to-measure (a pre-made pattern sized specifically to you)
- o Ready-to-wear (pre-sized off the rack; some stores do in-house adjustments)

      Select a type of store:

- o Department stores (Sears, Macy's, etc. — low prices, but limited selection/quality)
- o Menswear chains (Men's Wearhouse, Jos. A. Banks, etc. — wider selection and better in-house service/fitting)
- o Independent boutiques (unique selections; tend to have better service and quality)
- o Bespoke tailors (custom design and construction)
- o Online (you send your measurements and payment; they ship you a shirt — can require several back-and-forth shipments to get fit right)

      Step 4: Go Shopping

      Head to your target store or stores (see step 3)

      Identify the shirts that fit your selected description (see step 2)

      Within that selection, find the shirt that fit your measurements (step 1)

With the information in this checklist, you should be able your selection down to just a few shirts. Find the one that suits you best at the price you like — or move on, if you need to, and use the same information to shop elsewhere, until you find a purchase you like.