

CHECKLIST: HOW TO BUY A TUXEDO

_____ Step 1: Figure Your Size

Ready-to-wear tuxedos are sized the same way as suits. If you know your suit size, you can skip this step and go on to the next one. If not, follow these directions for figuring your suit size:

_____ Measure the circumference of your chest at the widest point (just under the arms for most men). Have a friend help so you can keep your arms loose at your sides. Round up to the nearest whole inch. This is your jacket size.

Jacket Size: _____

_____ Determine whether you need a short (S), regular (R), or long (L) jacket:

- o Short (S) — men aprox. 5'7" and under
- o Regular (R) — men aprox. 5'8" – 6'0"
- o Long (L) — men aprox. 6'1" and taller

_____ Determine your trouser size by measuring your waist (where the top of the trousers sit, at your natural waist) and your inseam (from the inside of your thigh where it meets your crotch down to the heel of your foot). You shouldn't be wearing shoes when you measure the inseam.

Waist Size: _____

Inseam: _____

Off-the-rack jackets will be sized with a letter and a number, indicating chest size and length: 38R is a regular-length jacket with a 38" chest, 42L is a long jacket with a 42" chest, and so on. Trousers may come sized to match the jacket's proportions, or you may be able to purchase the jacket and trousers as "separates," in which case you use the trouser and inseam measurements.

Men buying custom tuxedos will want to provide more detailed measurements for their tailor. We recommend following a measurement guide that takes chest, waist, and additional measurements into account, such as the one at [A Tailored Suit](#).

_____ Step 2: Identify the Tuxedo You Want

_____ Select a color for base of the jacket and trousers:

- o Black — most proper black tie option
- o Midnight blue — technically allowed, but aggressive by formal standards
- o White — for tropical-weather formal events only, esp. cruises

_____ Select a "facing" material for the lapels and trouser piping:

- o Satin — smooth and slightly reflective
- o Grosgrain — ribbed and less lustrous than satin

The color of the facing should always match the tuxedo fabric — black silk for a black jacket, midnight blue for midnight blue, and so on.

_____ Select a jacket lapel style:

- o Shawl — classic dinner jacket style; a simple curved shape
- o Peaked — slightly flashier style with pointed "wings" near the top
- o Notch — not recommended; considered a modern error by traditionalists

_____ Select a waist covering:

- o Cumberbund — silk sash at the waist (should match lapels/piping)
- o Dress waistcoat — backless vest with small lapels

Waist coverings should match the color of the jacket and facings. Unmatched, dark-colored cummerbunds are becoming accepted, but are still very fashion-forward by formalwear standards. Colored waistcoats are strictly a novelty item.

_____ Select a shirt collar style:

- o Wing — high collar with points off the shirt; most traditional style
- o Turndown — collar points lie flat against the shirt; never button-down

_____ Select a shoe style:

- o Dress pumps — heeled black pumps with a silk bow
- o Black balmoral oxfords — unadorned and polished to a high sheen

_____ Purchase the additional black tie necessities. Note that you do not have an option on most of these — there is only one acceptable style:

- o White dress shirt with studs (not buttons) for both cuffs and shirtfront
- o Black silk tie (same material as the jacket facing)
- o Formal trousers (match jacket, with silk piping on the outer seams)
- o Boutonniere or white pocket square as desired

Many stores, especially rental businesses, will offer tuxedos with colorful items or unusual styles. These are not recommended for purchase. A tuxedo is a hefty investment, and you want one you can wear to all black tie events. Be firm in insisting on a true black tie ensemble, not prom wear.

_____ **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 Menswear chains (Men's Wearhouse, Jos. A. Banks, etc. — not all will stock tuxedos; best to call ahead)
- o Formalwear rental and sale chains (large selections, often have markdowns/sales; quality can vary widely)
- 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 the tuxedo — 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 tuxedos that fit your selected description (see step 2)

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

With the information in this checklist, you should be able your selection down to just a few tuxedos. 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.