

How to look after your bespoke suit

It is nothing short of a delight slipping on a brand new bespoke suit. Feeling it hug you in all the right places is truly a unique feeling, as is knowing that you are wearing an item that will fit nobody else quite as well as it fits you.

The feeling needn't be a one off though. If properly looked after your garments will last you many years longer than any off-the-peg equivalent, which will give you that satisfying feeling over and over again. Furthermore, the canvassing in your jacket will actually mold to your body over time, so the longer you own the garment, the better it will fit.

- 1) Don't over dry clean – A common mistake people make with their suits is that they dry-clean them frequently in order to keep them crisp and clean. Chemicals in dry-cleaning can change the look and fit over time. Dry – cleaning should be kept to a maximum of 4 times a year, either quarterly if worn excessively or when the suit has a visible spill on it.
- 2) Pressing – If your suit has become creased, the solution is to press or steam it to ease out the creases. This is key to prolonging your suits life. A quick way of reducing creases without cost is to hang your suit in the bathroom whilst you shower. The steam eases the creases out without any damage to the cloth that repeat ironing would cause. If the creases are more severe, take the suit to your dry cleaners and request that they press the suit, without cleaning it.
- 3) Hangars – Your suits shoulders are padded carefully to fit your shoulder perfectly. If you have a sloped or a dropped shoulder the padding can be more extreme to balance the suit correctly. For this reason, your suit should always be kept on a hangar designed for suits. These hangars are bigger, offering correct support to the garment. If a slim hangar is used, over time the padding will droop over the sides and the point of the hangar will dig into the padding – ultimately changing the shape and fit of your garment.
- 4) Rotation – As a rule of thumb, you should never wear the same suit more than two days in a row. If possible, you should have at least 5 suits in your wardrobe (3 at a minimum). This is for a few reasons. Firstly, even in cold weather you will sweat, leaving a suit to air will allow time for the sweat to evaporate. Getting your suit too wet from sweating will run the risk of shrinking it – and of course you will need to clean the suit sooner which is less than ideal. Secondly, wearing your suit causes stress to the fabric. The less you wear the suit, the less stress caused and therefore less damage done. Every extra suit you have in your wardrobe will increase the life of the others.

- 5) Utilise suit bags – Any garment made from wool has one arch nemesis. Moths. To save your suits and coats being munched through whilst in your wardrobe, keep your garments in their suit bags. There are actually moth proof-suit bags designed specifically to keep the critters at bay, a useful bit of information if you live in a particularly moth abundant area. Even without a bag being mothproofed, any suit bag will help protect against dust - and even creasing in a tightly packed wardrobe.

Put these tips to action gentlemen and your suits will remain your pride and joy years down the line. Your boss will be impressed you're always smart, your wallet will remain fuller for longer and as a result you'll look and feel a million dollars. Need we go on?

How to dress when you are BIG or TALL

For gentleman who are taller and/or more heavysset than most, dressing well can often prove a challenge as not all of the generalised styling rules will apply to you. But never fear, here are some tips to keep you looking suave, no matter what the scales might be saying:

1. Dress for the body you have, not the body you want

The first mistake that many larger gents make is repeating to themselves "I won't buy any clothes yet, I'll wait until I'm my goal weight". The idea of dressing well is to utilise your clothes so that they flatter your body as it is, right now. Wear a suit that's too big and you will look larger than you actually are. Wear a suit too tight and you run the risk of looking like a stuffed sausage! If it takes half a year to reach your ideal weight, that's 6 months of sausage impressions. Not a good look.

So always buy a suit that fits you perfectly at your current weight and alter it as you go along, until you hit your ideal weight. That way, you'll look sharp the whole time you are losing weight, and when you finally get to where you want to be you can reward yourself with a brand new suit, bespoke to your brand new body shape.

2. The fit

If you're sporting a belly, the first thing you're likely to find when buying an off the peg suit is that, to get a jacket to fit round the waist, the shoulder and chest size will be too large. If this is the case, try and find a jacket in a regular fit rather than a tailored or slim fit. This will mean a better fit on the chest and shoulder, but the cut of the jacket will also have more cloth on the waist so it still closes.

When wearing a single-breasted suit, try a single button instead of two buttons. Single button suits often lower the point at which the button fastens and therefore creates a longer “V” shape on the wearer’s torso. This will take attention away from the wearer’s width and instead directs the eye down the body, making the wearer appear taller and leaner.

The key to a well fitting trouser is mostly down to the length. Once you have found a comfortable waist size for you, have the trouser shortened so that there isn’t a huge mass of excess cloth at the hem. The creases on the front and back of the trouser should sit completely flat. The smooth lines of the creases will again create the illusion of length instead of width. Pair this with a jacket that doesn’t bag or pull, and you’ll already be looking a stone lighter – without having looked at a lettuce!

3. Cloths and Patterns

If you are already large, it is wise to avoid cloths that will make you look larger. Avoid thicker cloths such as flannels and worsted wools. Instead, light twills and herringbones are your best friend, providing both a sleeker aesthetic and a cooler, less sweat-inducing, wearing experience.

When choosing patterns it is best to err on the conservative side, as large and loud can deter from the smooth fit that you have worked so hard to find. Large checks for example can create an illusion of width, further accentuating a wide stomach. Pinstripes work in the opposite way; drawing the eye up the body to create height. For that reason, we would recommend either solid colours or stripes. If you simply have to have checks, try to keep the check small and the colour tame.

So there you have it. Armed with this knowledge, perhaps you will see your body in your new suit and think “Hey, I already look great in a suit, I don’t need to go to the gym!” Perhaps seeing your body in a new well-fitting suit will drive you to hit the gym harder. Whatever the conclusion gentlemen, you’ll be looking good and feeling great – what else matters?

An in-depth guide to dinner suits

Where it started

Dinner suits were first invented by Henry Pool of Savile row in 1886. The then Prince of Wales requested that his tailor make him a short tail-coat to be worn at formal dinners. He felt that his everyday lounge suits were too informal for such events, while tail-coats he saw as too formal – besides the tails were an awful nuisance whilst seated or dancing. The original dinner suit was cut from midnight

blue mohair, as the cloth had a slight shine and appeared black in low light whilst appearing blue in the day.

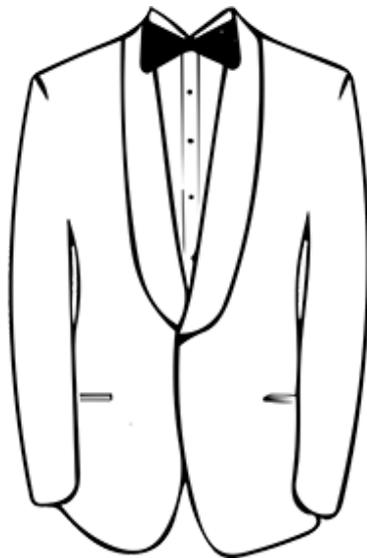
Though a midnight blue was the first type of dinner suit, black became a more popular option, which is why most dinner suits seen today are black. This being said, many celebrities have popularised the idea of different coloured and textured dinner suits. While this experimentation is great if you are a celebrity, arriving to a black tie event in a red jacquard dinner suit may raise more than a few eyebrows and could even leave you thrown out in the cold!

The basics

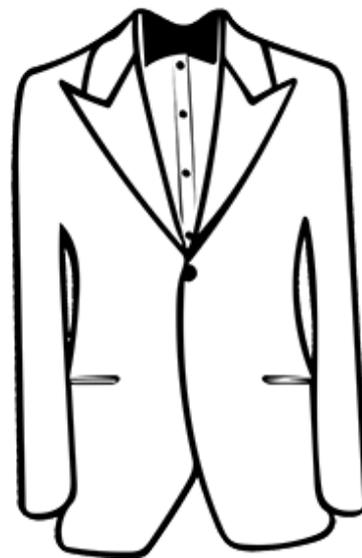
A dinner suit should look immaculate. All lines should be clean and interrupted. Even if every other rule in the book is followed, an ill-fitting dinner suit will look awful. Unless you are incredibly lucky and find a hire or off-the-peg suit that fits – go bespoke. You will have the suit for many-many years and it will fit perfectly every single time.

The suit

There are a few basic ideas behind the dinner suit that should be followed to keep a dinner suit, a dinner suit. Such as...



Shawl Lapel



Peak Lapel Suit

Lapels – For a dinner suit there are two options for your lapel, these options are shawl or peak. Shawl lapels are only seen on dinner suits and smoking jackets, as these are very formal garments. A peak lapel is also very formal and so is perfectly acceptable on dinner suits. Regardless of which of these lapels you chose, it should always be in satin. Be aware that notch lapels - the least formal of the lapels - should only be saved for day-to-day lounge suits.

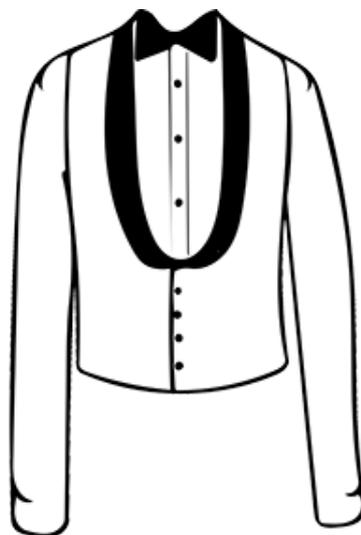
Pockets – A dinner suit should always have jetted pockets in satin to match the lapels. Flap pockets and patch pockets both created unwanted bulk and as a dinner suit is extremely formal, it requires as little detail as possible.

Buttons – Dinner suits are traditionally single breasted with only one button. This button should be kept fastened at all times. The addition of a second button (which should never be fastened) creates extra unnecessary detail, which is to be avoided – if it's single breasted, it should only ever have one button. This button (and the cuff buttons) should be cloth coloured to match the suit, again helping blend it into the suit and remove any unnecessary detail.

Some dinner suits in the modern age are double breasted. As long as the rest of the Dinner suit rules are followed, this would be perfectly acceptable at a black tie event. However, if you are following the theme here, the less buttons on the garment, the cleaner the look is. By that rule, a 2x2 double-breasted garment will be smarter to look at than a 3x2 double-breasted.

Vents – On a British lounge suit you will likely find two vents on the back of the jacket. These allow for movement and comfort when the suit is worn all day. Dinner suits on the other hand do not need this added movement; their sole function is to make you look immaculate. It is for this reason that a true dinner suit should have no vents. No vents means the jacket will remain stiff with little movement, reducing the risk of creasing and, as it is worn only one or two evenings a year, comfort should be of little concern!

The trousers – The trousers can be pleated or flat fronted, depending on taste, but must always have a plain hem (to reduce detail) and a satin band running down the outer seam to match the lapels and pockets. Some choose to have the trouser high waisted to prevent the white triangle of shirt showing between jacket and trouser – with the triangle gone there is no need to wear a cummerbund or waistcoat



A horseshoe Waistcoat

The waistcoat – Not seen very often these days, is a waistcoat with a dinner suit. It used to be that a dinner suit should only ever be worn with a waistcoat or a cummerbund, so as to stop the little white triangle of shirt from showing between the jacket and trouser. However, if you do opt for a waistcoat, it should be a horseshoe (scoop). Either double or single breasted is acceptable.

Risks

So we know that midnight blue or black are acceptable. Brighter colours have been touched on and – though celebs do it – should be avoided for black tie. This leaves the infamous white dinner jacket. Popularised by Sean Connery in Dr. No, the white dinner jacket is seen by some as the coolest option for dinner wear. It's a great way of getting noticed, but not always for the right reasons!

As a guest at a host's dinner function, arriving in a white jacket may be interpreted as an attention seeking look-at-me manoeuvre, so be cautious and gauge how appropriate it will be – perhaps even ask the host if it is acceptable, beforehand. Some might suggest that a white jacket is only acceptable for dinner attire in hotter climes, making it a good option for cruises and get-aways.

Add ons

Shoes and socks – There are really only two shoes styles you can choose from, the first (and safest in Britain) is a patent whole-cut oxford. The whole-cut eliminates detail on the shoe (such as toecaps) and the high shine that a patent shoe offers adds formality that your day-to-day oxfords do not have.

The second, riskier option, is to wear a formal pump with a ribbon atop the shoe. This style shoe should still be black patent leather, but exposes more foot and adds a detail that some might frown upon – so wear with caution. Traditionally socks would always have been black silk but, in this day, as long as they are black they will be perfectly acceptable.

Shirts – Perhaps the biggest faux pas seen with black tie is not the suit itself – but rather the shirt that it is paired with. A dinner suit should only ever be worn with a turn-down collar, be it a kent or a cut-away. NEVER a wing-tip collar. Wing-tips are to be reserved for morning wear and white tie functions. The cuff should always be a double (French) cuff, or – again because of Bond – a cocktail cuff. Both cuffs require folding back, but a French cuff creates the need for cufflinks while the cocktail cuff fastens with buttons.

Traditionally shirts would be worn with a pleated bib, though nowadays this is seen as a very old-school style. A Marcella bib is a more modern alternative. The shirt should either have its buttons hidden under the front placket, or it should be fastened using black or pearl shirt studs.

Cufflinks – Another common faux pas is to wear any old cufflinks with a dinner suit. Cufflinks should be either in black or pearl – much like dress studs.

Pocket squares – When wearing with a dinner suit, one should only ever wear white and (if following the rule book) linen – folded into a neat rectangle. Anything more flamboyant detracts from the rest of the tidy/ immaculate look of the suit.

Bow tie – As long as the bow tie is black, you are fairly safe from the fashion police. This being said, tiny or huge bow ties are a huge no-no. The bow tie can have pointed ends (suits a pointy peak lapel beautifully) or flat (best with shawl lapels). The edges of the bowtie should be in line with your pupils. A ready-tied bow tie is acceptable, but a self-tie bow tie is preferable – besides, is there anything cooler than an undone bow-tie at the end of a night?

Watch – Wearing a watch to a dinner event is traditionally unacceptable. It signifies that you are watching the time, a very rude thing to do when you have been invited to a party. If you absolutely must wear a watch however, it should be as subtle as possible; this means a black leather strap and a silver casing.

Coats – If you are wearing a coat it must be black. Double-breasted is preferred as it is more formal, though a single-breasted coat will not have you thrown out.

Scarves – A white silk dress scarf is a nice addition to your dinner suit – it gives you a chance to add individuality, as not many people will have thought of it. This being said, make sure it is white and silk – anything else is unacceptable.

Cummerbund (also known as cumberbund) – A cummerbund should only be worn if you are NOT wearing a waistcoat. It is to prevent the little white triangle of shirt and so is redundant if wearing high waisted trousers or a waistcoat. If you are wearing one however, it should only ever be black silk.

Summary

Sounds like a lot of rules doesn't it? To simplify; the fit must be perfect, details should be minimal and all of it should be of the best quality that you can muster. If faced with a "do I/don't I" question, ask yourself – what would Bond do?

Tweed

"I've got the need, the need, for tweed" ... Something like that right? Maybe not, but in the autumn and winter months, there is a need for tweed.

The most iconic of all tweeds is Harris tweed, as it is from the isle of Harris, located in the far north west of Scotland. The word tweed is from an old Scottish

word “Tweed” which means, “twill” – which is the type of weave used to create tweed. The twill used makes for a great sturdy, heavy fabric that will well insulate the wearer in colder climates. Due to the tightness of the weave, the cloth is also water resistant to a degree, making it an incredible garment to be wearing in the country.

Tweeds normally come in a range of earthy colours; greens, browns and oranges being the most common. Pair these colours with the cloths rugged properties and you have a garment ideal for camouflaging yourself against country terrain and harsh weather – this is why many hunters opt for a tweed jacket or even full suit. Saying that, never have any of the Fielding and Nicholson team seen deer galloping around the city, so why buy tweed in the concrete jungle if there’s nothing to hunt?

The City still gets cold and luckily tweed isn’t selective with which environment it works best in. On a day too cold for a normal suit jacket but too warm for a coat, a tweed will keep you at a perfect comfortable temperature. The colours in tweeds will help you stand out in an otherwise greying environment too, so you can be warm and stylish all at once. You may not be able to see the beautiful colours on the trees, but that doesn’t mean you can’t wear them. Every year in autumn all the colours of tweed come back, meaning the stylish look will never fade.

Nothing will last quite as long as a bespoke overcoat or a tweed garment. A thicker fabric will hold up against general wear much better than a thinner fabric will and tighter weaves like tweed will act very much like a thick coat. Most all year round suits will wear through or shine after a few years, even the best quality suit will fade after years of wear. But tweed refuses to wither. Ever wondered why every charity shop is littered with tweed jackets from years ago? Well they’re likely the only survivors from the suits of days gone by. Buy a bespoke coat or tweed garment now, and you’ll likely be wearing it proudly 20 years from now, gliding around on your hover-board – stylish as ever.

Types of shoes and when to wear them

So you’ve spent the last year building up your wardrobe, you’ve probably got a navy, a charcoal or a black suit, perhaps even a brown or a slightly louder check. Each suit magnificently tailored to you; a collection to be proud of.

But, it’s not over yet. You may have an immaculate wardrobe, but do you have the shoes to match? “Of course I do” I hear you cry. But I’m not talking about the one pair of scuffed smart black shoes that you wear every day; I’m talking about a few choices that you may not have even considered.

Shoe types



A whole cut oxford



A toe cap oxford

Oxford – An oxford shoe is the smartest option for formal wear. An oxford shoe is any type of shoe with a closed lacing style. Within the oxford style there are several style sub-genres: completely plain (whole-cut/one piece), a toe cap oxford, a wingtip oxford and a plain toe oxford. As a rule of thumb (similarly to suits), the more detail/decoration on the shoe, the more casual it becomes. For this reason alone, the whole-cut oxford is the smartest shoe followed by a plain toe oxford; the toe cap/wingtip is the most casual style of oxford. The smartest colour for an oxford is black, though a deep brown comes a close second.



A whole cut derby



A toe cap derby

Derby – A derby is very similar to an oxford in style, the difference is that derby's have an open lace rather than a closed lace. This gives the shoe a little more flexibility and makes the shoe slightly more informal than an oxford. Derby's can be found with a wingtip (most informal), a toecap (moderately formal) or a whole cut (most formal derby). Derby's are most commonly seen in black, which is the smartest option. Brown or oxblood derby's give a much more casual look.



A brogued wingtip oxford



A brogued toe cap oxford

Brogue – A brogue is technically not a type of shoe. A brogue is any kind of shoe with “brogueing”. Brogueing is the term used to describe the decorative perforations punched into the leather either following the shoes seams or in a decorative pattern. Though brogueing can technically be used on any shoe, it is most commonly seen on oxford, derby or monk strap shoes.

The most common types of brogueing are; Full brogues (wingtip brogues), quarter brogues, semi-brogues and long wing brogues. A brogued shoe in black is less formal than an oxford or derby, but is still acceptable for formal suiting. Brown or tan brogued shoes are still a smart option, but will be better suited to jeans or chinos.



A single monk strap



**A double monk strap with
toe cap**

Monk Strap - Monk strap shoes offer certain flexibility to ones wardrobe. Instead of having a lace fastening like most shoes and boots, monk straps have one or two straps that cross the top of the shoe and fasten to the side using buckles. These buckles add a splash of detail that not many other shoes provide. Dressed down with chinos or jeans monk strap shoes will suit very well. As well as this, a plain work suit can be given an extra bit of umph with the decorative buckles of a monk strap. The monk strap can have a toe cap or be plain and isn't

exempt from brogueing. As usual, black is the most formal colour, with dark brown and oxblood close behind.



A penny loafer



A tassel loafer

Loafer - Loafers are the most casual shoe type on this list. They have no straps or laces, as they are simply a slip on shoe. They were originally created as a comfortable shoe to be worn around ones abode and only up until recently did they become a shoe that can be worn casually. There are three main types of loafer: the penny loafer, the tassel loafer and the bit loafer. Some would argue that the bit loafer is most formal due to the decorative metal bar across its front. A penny loafer has a leather strap across the front, with a decorative shape cut into it. The tassel loafer looks most like a vintage slipper, with tassels attached to the front of the shoe instead of a leather band.

In the modern age loafers are very commonly seen in the UK, often worn with slimmer cropped trousers. Though this style is seen often, the combination of a very formal suit and a very casual shoe may be deemed incorrect in more formal environments. We'd recommend reserving loafers for more casual suits and looks. If you still chose to wear your loafers with your business suit, a black penny will look the smartest (the bit loafer may be seen as too "flashy").

This list covers just a few types of shoes, but these are the most commonly seen shoes in any gentleman's wardrobe, at least for their formal wear. As a rule of thumb, if the shoe presents more detail and steers away from being black, the less formal the overall look will become. Now you know your suits and you know your shoes – you're almost unstoppable!