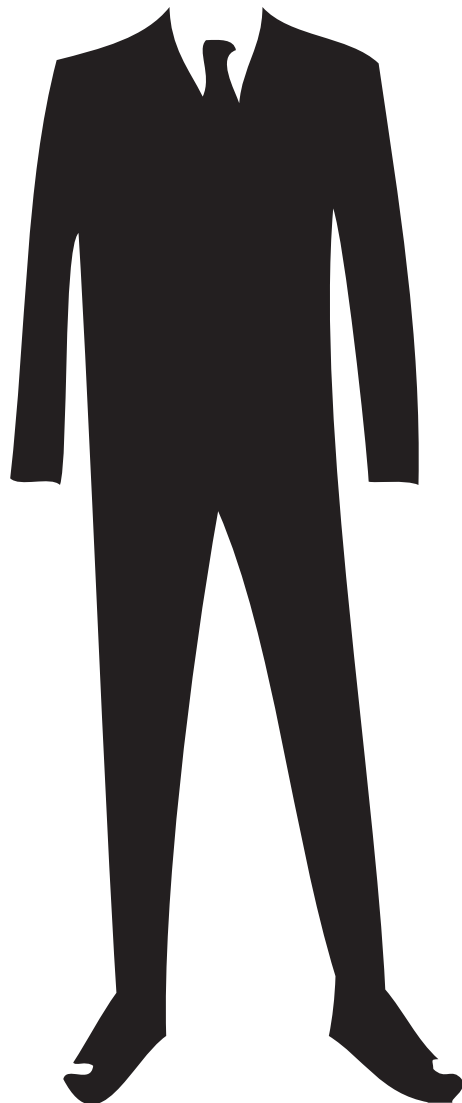


♣ GUY STYLE GUIDE ♣

A beginner's guide to the perfect first suit

the easy, pain-free solution to finding your winning outfit.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT FIRST SUIT: THE EASY, PAIN-FREE SOLUTION TO FINDING YOUR WINNING OUTFIT

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First Edition

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INTRODUCTION

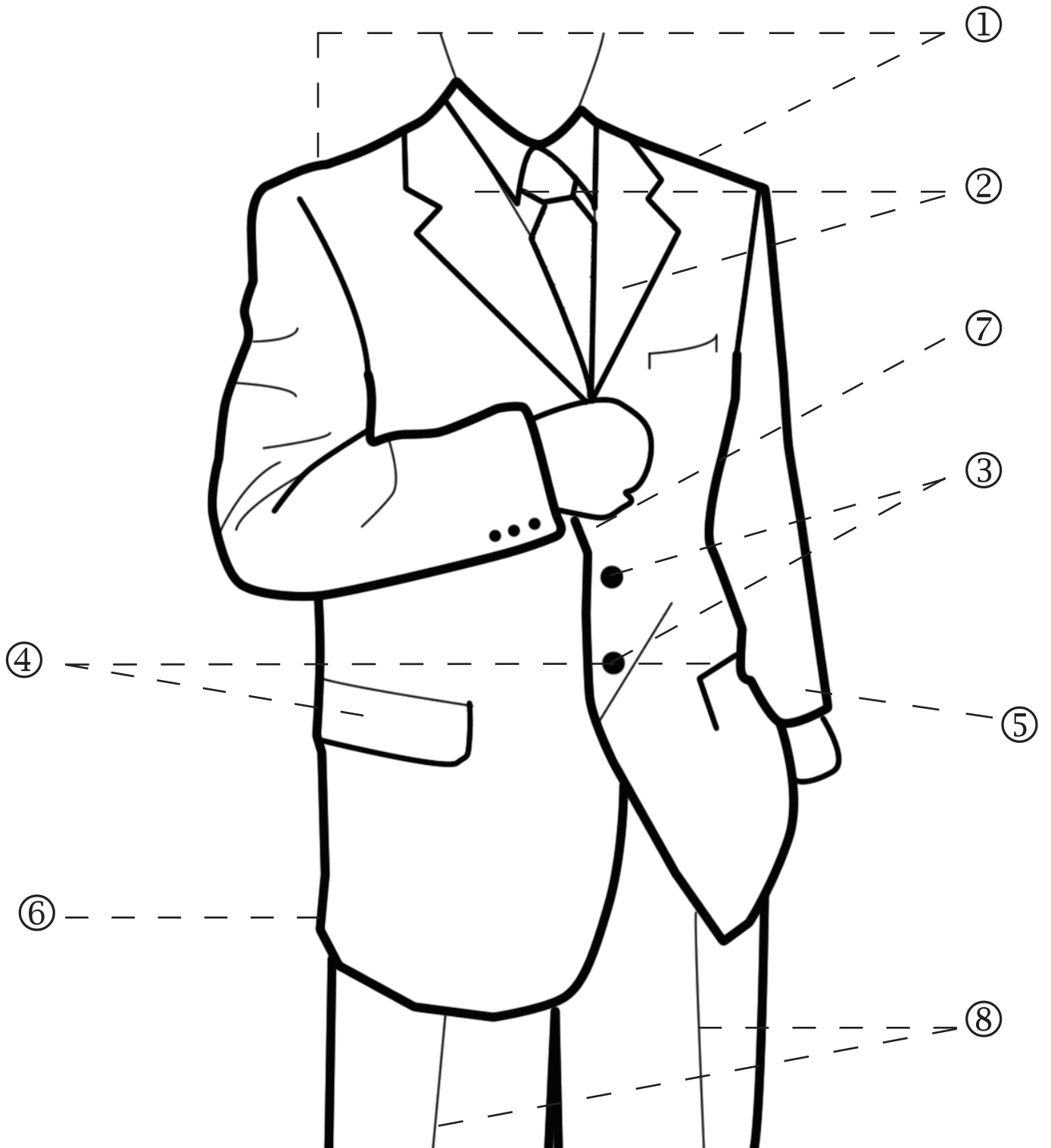
Choosing your first suit is enthralling and overwhelming in equal measure; suit selection is a tricky business at the best of times; you need something that's going to look modern, elegant, timeless and chic – but should you wear notched lapels or peak? A double or a single breasted variation? Should you try pleats, and what to do about cuffs?

Fear not, fair reader! I shall guide you around the pitfalls of finding your first suit. Even if this isn't the first time you've ventured into the 'business formal' department, the hints and tips revealed here should help guide you toward a suit more sharp and

graceful than you ever thought imaginable.

So, without further ado, let's dive straight in and take a look at the basics of this sartorial staple...

Johnathan



STEP 1: IDENTIFYING SUIT ELEMENTS

① SHOULDERS

The far edge of the jacket suit should fall in alignment with the far edge of your shoulders. It should closely match your frame and natural posture. If it doesn't then you've chosen the wrong size or fit. No matter what a salesman might say about adjustments, if the shoulders aren't right then the jacket will never truly work.

② LAPELS

These are the small slices of fabric that fall down from the collar and meet around the middle. Lapels can be wide, narrow, flared, notched or peaked. For your first suit, I'd try not to be too dramatic. Stick to the traditional styles and subtle notches until you're ready to be more adventurous. Ensure your lapels are kept in proportion with your own dimensions.

③ BUTTONS

You'll find that virtually all suits employ buttons somewhere. They come in a variety of materials, colours and sizes and can make or break a look. Two button and three button suits are the most common, but both are acceptable.

Suits with more than three buttons shouldn't be entertained at this stage. It should also be noted that one button suits are becoming popular in fashion magazines and on catwalk runways; however, unless you have the body of a model, it's incredibly difficult to pull off this look.

④ POCKETS

We all need pockets for our jackets, but don't go overboard. With a growing trend of blending casual and formal, increasingly more suit jackets are arriving with extra pockets and fold slips for the essential gadgets of twenty-first century life; needless to say, you should resist the urge to invest. Look for clean, subtle lines and crisp defined shapes.

Suit pockets are sewn up to hold the line of the fabric in the store. Once home, you can carefully unpluck the stitches. However, don't be tempted to load up on MP3 players and cell phones; these will ruin the shape of the jacket and warp the fabric.

⑤ SLEEVES

When in a relaxed upright position, the sleeves on a jacket should hit just below your wrist, roughly where your thumb begins. A good sleeve length should allow roughly an inch of shirt cuff to remain visible.

Most jacket sleeves will also have a small row of buttons creating what's called a Surgeon's Cuff; cheaper suits present these purely for show, but more expensive, custom-made suits should unfasten. Some guys like to undo these buttons, while others believe it needlessly flashy. When in doubt, keep them fastened.

⑥ VENTS

These are the perpendicular slits on the rear and sides of the jacket. There are three basic types to contend with: single, double or ventless.

Ventless jackets create a smooth, clean line and appear quite dressy; however, they have a tendency to conceal pockets and restrict mobility.

Single vents are typically centered down the rear of the jacket; these offer more flexibility and accessibility than ventless jackets and will maintain a good fit.

Double vents are graceful and user-friendly, providing good pocket access, but hefty fellows should avoid double-vented jackets though, as they create quite a boxy

look and will accentuate a large rear end.

The number of vents you choose is entirely down to your own preferences. Ventless jackets have a more modern flair, but restrict movement; double vents are easier to wear but sacrifice aesthetics for comfort, and single vents are a compromise between the two.

⑦ BREAST

When choosing your first suit there's only one choice: single breasted. Whilst double-breasted suits are acceptable for most occasions (and can be worn by all except the huskiest/muscular body type), single-breasted jackets are universal and less prone to aging. Although less 'dressy', the single breasted suit is great for all your day to day needs.

⑧ PLEATS

When it comes to your legwear, you also have to consider whether you want pleats or not. To cut a long story short, most men should avoid them; they're fast fading from fashion, and won't appear flattering on men unless they happen to be heavily built.

COLOURS

The next thing to consider is colour. There are a whole host of hues and tones you can choose from; this often befuddles most first-timers and inevitably they choose something inappropriate or unflattering.

For the first time suit there's only one colour worth considering: a rich, navy blue. Don't be suckered by the allure of black at this stage unless you're planning to attend a funeral: a deep navy will go with just about anything and will never fall from vogue. You'd be hard pressed to find a shirt colour or tie pattern that doesn't work extremely well with navy suits. If you want to go darker, try a 'midnight' blue; it's several shades deeper than navy

but still retains its rich, sumptuous colour.

If you want to push the envelope out and buy a second suit simultaneously, your next choice should be charcoal grey. Nearly as versatile as navy, grey will suit all skin tones and match up with an enormous number of 'shirt and tie' combinations.

FABRICS

WOOL

Wool is a great choice for suits. It holds its shape well, gives great protection from the elements and is comfortable in all but the hottest climates. Woollen suits can be either regular or worsted. Worsted wool is spun to feel smoother and lighter to the touch, but it's typically more expensive than other material.

Naturally, there are a range of threads on offer: merino, cashmere and mohair to name but a few. These will range dramatically in price depending on rarity and weight, so finding the exact match depends wholly on your budgetary and mobility requirements.

COTTON

Cotton has become an increasingly desirable material for crafting suits. Cotton fibres can be spun in numerous ways to create a bewildering range of textures and weaves. The advantages of cotton are as abundant as its availability; cotton's lightweight, easily cleaned and can be woven for highly tailored fits and finishes.

However, cotton does have a few disadvantages. It loses its shape more easily than other materials and is often more delicate; cotton suits don't typically last as long, and they aren't as good at retaining heat in cold weather.

SYNTHETICS

Nylon and polyester are a very common sight on inexpensive 'off-the-rack' suits. All the versatility of cotton, but without the cost, synthetic man-made materials are wrinkle resistant and won't shrink like wool.

Unfortunately, synthetic fabrics have a tendency to look cheap and 'shiny'; fashion connoisseurs can spot these a mile away, especially if they've been lazily maintained or poorly manufactured.

“WHAT MATERIAL SHOULD I CHOOSE?”

If you can afford the luxury of spending hundreds or thousands on quality fabrics then do so – as well as being worthy of the investment, one great suit is worth five cheap ones any day of the week. Don't scrimp when it comes to buying your first suit; you want this to be a defining piece in your wardrobe, so treat it as such.

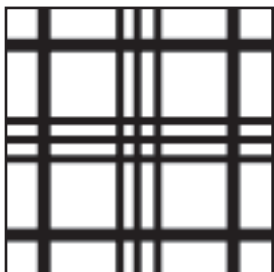
However, always keep durability in mind. Paying top dollar may mean receiving the finest fabrics and extremely large thread-counts, but these are often more delicate than less expensive textiles, and won't necessarily

be able to withstand as much punishment.

If you're on a tight budget then don't despair; thankfully, blended suits are plentiful and reasonably priced. Check those labels for a mix of natural and synthetic fibres that'll match your budget and body type without revealing a cheap, inferior build.

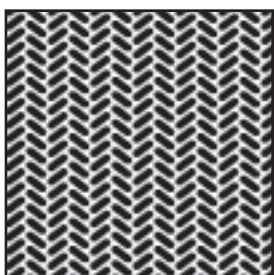
PATTERNS

There are a number of patterns available to choose from when it comes to suits. Below is a list of the most common patterns and how to identify them:



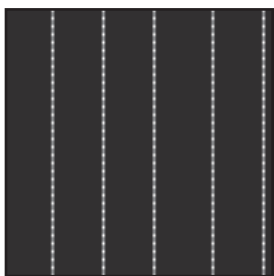
CHECKS

A series of mixed-sized squares with symmetrical repetitions.



HERRINGBONE

A repeating chevron that slightly resembles a cartoon fish bone.



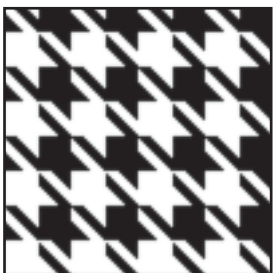
PINSTRIPLE

A line of evenly spaced, tightly-packed dotted stripes.



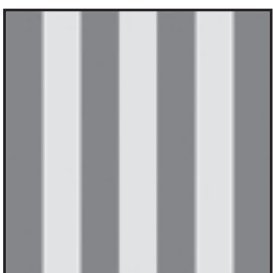
WINDOWPANE

A thin, often monotone, grid design.



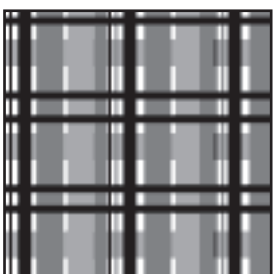
HOUNDSTOOTH

An angular pattern that vaguely resembles canine dentures.



STRIPES

A repeating pattern of evenly spaced lines.



PLAID

Also known as Tartan. Alternating checks of colour woven into the fabric.

“WHAT PATTERN SHOULD I CHOOSE FOR MY FIRST SUIT?”

It's always best to start out buying plain, solid blocks of colour whenever possible. A single toned suit will go with a greater range of shirts and ties.

That said, if you are desperate for a pattern, start out with a thin pinstripe, or a tasteful windowpane design.

Be careful to keep the design subtle though; high contrast colours appear very busy on most suits and make it increasingly difficult to get a good match with the rest of your clothing.

STEP 2: DESIGN

BRITISH

The quintessentially British look emanated from the ever popular 'Savile Road' tailors in London. Tightly cut and contoured to the body, the 'British' style ensures a good fit with clean lines.

EUROPEAN

Originating from the fashion houses of Italy, the 'European' suit emphasises the upper body with large shoulder pads, and utilizes slim-line bottoms to narrow the leg. A 'love it or hate it' power-look.

AMERICAN

Its 'Ivy League' appearance is more casual than other styles. Its sloping lines and looser fit create a more relaxed impression, and won't 'hug' the body like the silhouette-clinging 'British' fit.

“WHICH DESIGN IS BEST?”

The sharply contoured look of the 'British' suit is most flattering for the majority of first time buyers. The only men who don't benefit from such a style are 'muscle men'; they'll appear to burst at the seams or 'bulge' in highly tailored fits, so these individuals should look for an 'American' or 'European' alternative without question.

STEP 3: WHERE TO BUY

You needn't travel to sartorial hotspots to purchase your new suit. The best place to start your adventure is your nearest department store; from here you'll get a good idea as to the styles and cuts currently being exploited in your area. Also, the atmosphere in a department store isn't as direct or intimidating as you'd get with a one-to-one tailoring service.

Still, welcoming as menswear department are, always remain weary of sales staff. Ultimately, it's their job to sell you clothing and they'll say just about anything to get the tills ringing. If you know that the fit isn't right, don't let them railroad you; unless you're ninety-nine percent happy with the suit, don't even consider purchasing

– that extra one percent can be altered later, but even professional tailors can only do so much.

Always attend your shopping trips wearing appropriate attire. A dress shirt, correctly knotted tie and formal shoes are essential to getting the best fit. Some department stores will provide you with this attire if required, but always resist the offer – it'll distort the perception of how the suit will look with clothing from your personal wardrobe. If you don't yet own these garments, consider buying them before proceeding with your suit purchase.

Also, you should know your basic measurements before

hitting the stores. It's tempting to simply let the sales person do it for you; however they won't take your personal idiosyncrasies into account. For example, many guys wear their trousers on their natural waistline around the hips; by contrast, most salespersons are taught to measure slightly higher on the rise.

Once you've found a couple of suits you like the look of, it's time to hit the changing rooms. Be sure to use the mirrors to full effect – the more angles you can get on the suit the better you can judge its true appearance; try to utilize a minimum of three mirrors for optimum coverage.

TOP TIP

If you're full of self-doubt, bring along a friend with good fashion sense. They'll give you honest advice without being too blunt about your weird selections, and you can slip off for a relaxing beverage afterwards.

RESOURCES

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For more information on everything relating to the world of male fashion, grooming and styling, visit:

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