

## Product Highlights



## Choosing the Right Suit Fabric for Men's Suits

Men's suits - Can't figure out what type of fabrics you should look for in a suit? Let's review what you are likely to come across when hitting the shops.

### WOOLS

Wool is the fabric of choice for good men's suits. It's natural, it breathes well, it's durable and looks great to boot. There are four main kinds of wool:

#### Tweed

Tweed is a very heavy wool fabric, popular in places like the British Isles where there seems to be a permanent chill in the air. The average wearer of tweed is more mature if you get my meaning. Stay away from tweed, especially if you're packing a few extra pounds. Tweed is not the larger man's friend.

#### Flannel

Flannel is the heaviest of the non-tweed wools. It is a corded wool, it's durable and is especially nice in a charcoal gray with classic pinstripes

For a suit, it might be a bit too hot in most office environments. While nice, it's not an ideal fabric for a suit.

#### Tropical

This is usually a kind of wool crepe, which is a lightweight fabric. It's more of a summer weight, the sort you might wear in warmer climates. Being lighter, it is also more susceptible to wrinkles, and therefore requiring frequent visits to the dry-cleaner. This clearly would not be an every day kind of suit fabric.

### Worsted

As I have stated before, worsted wools are your best bet for a suit. These will be your gabardines or mid-weight corded wools. They are durable, wear well and usually fine for year-round wear. They can be a little lighter or heavier, depending on the weave, but consider them mid-weight.

You might come across a suit that is advertised as a "high-twist," 100, or Super 120 or Super 150. This just means that the suit is made of a worsted wool yarn that has been twisted more often than the usual 60-80 twist fabrics. This makes it a finer cloth of a somewhat lighter weight. Such suits would be perfectly fine, therefore, for spring, summer, and fall, but might not work in winter.

### ***OTHER FABRICS:***

#### Cotton

Cotton is probably the most acceptable choice for men's suits that isn't wool. If you live in a warm place this is a great alternative look to wool. I prefer cotton suits that have a little lycra or something that gives it stretch. This will allow your suit to keep its shape and will prevent the color from fading more quickly.

#### Linen

Okay, you look at linen and you think of a beach on the Mediterranean or the Caribbean Islands and you're strolling down that beach with your pants rolled up a touch and . . . ahhh. Stop dreaming! As a fabric goes, linen wrinkles quickly, stains, and doesn't wear well. It is not acceptable for a suit, unless you really are one of the lucky few that actually do live on a beach in a tropical place.

#### Polyester

The 70's are over so let's move on.

#### Micro Fiber

A very light polyester. Again, let's move on.

## Teflon

Just don't do it.



Cotton, Wool and Linen and Silk are all natural fibers. Microfibers, Polyester and Rayon are all manufactured fibers. Almost all natural fabrics allow your body to "breathe". When your body can breathe, perspiration is not retained and you feel dry, clean and odor free. The manufactured fibers and microfibers are not as breathable and tend to trap body heat, perspiration and odors.

### ***Natural fibers:***

#### **COTTON**

Cotton comes from a plant and Cotton's characteristics are comfortable, soft hand absorbent, good color retention and prints well. Machine-washable, dry-cleanable and good strength. Drapes well, easy to handle and sew.

#### **WOOL**

Wool is a natural animal fiber made from the fleece of sheep. Wool's characteristics are comfortable, luxurious, soft to the hand and versatile. Wool is lightweight and good insulator. Wool is wrinkle-resistant and absorbent, thus easy to dye, however most wool is dry clean only.

#### **LINEN**

Linen is made from flax, a vegetable fiber. Linen's characteristics are comfortable, good strength, twice as strong as cotton. Hand-washable or dry-cleanable. Crisp hand and tailors well. Absorbent dyes and prints well. Lightweight to heavyweight; no static or pilling problems. Fair abrasion resistant.

#### **SILK**

Silk is a natural animal fiber created by the silk worm. Silk's characteristics are soft or crisp hand. Luxurious, drapes and tailors well. Silk is the thinnest of all natural fibers but dyes and prints well.

Hand-washable or dry-cleanable. Little problem with static nor pilling however, only fair abrasion resistance. Silk has a poor resistance to prolonged exposure to sunlight

### ***Manufactured fibers:***



### **MICROFIBERS**

Microfiber is a manufactured fiber available in acrylic, nylon, polyester and rayon. Microfibers characteristics are ultra fine, finer than the most delicate silk. Extremely drape able, very soft, luxurious hand with a silken or suede touch. Washable, dry cleanable and shrink-resistant. High strength (except Rayon). Excellent pleat retention. Insulates well against wind, rain and cold. Microfiber is not really a fiber unto itself. Rather, it refers to an ultra-fine fiber, which can be woven or knit into a very high quality fabric construction. It originates as a polyester microfiber and there have been new developments in nylon microfibers that have become important in rayon microfibers, and acrylic microfibers. One of the important characteristics of microfiber fabrics is that they can be woven so tightly that the fabric cannot be penetrated by wind, rain, or cold. Microfibers also have a wicking ability, which allows perspiration to pass through the fabric. Microfibers are generally comfortable in contact with skin.

### **POLYESTER**

Polyester is also a manufactured fiber. Polyester's characteristics are strong, crisp, soft to the hand. Resistant to stretching and shrinkage.

Washable or dry-cleanable. Quick drying, resilient, wrinkle resistant and excellent pleat retention (if heat set). Abrasion resistant and resistant to most chemicals. Because of its low absorbency, stain removal can be a problem, on top of that, static and pilling problems could also happen. Of all the manufactured fibers, polyester is the most used. Polyester is the best wash-and-use fiber. Unfortunately, because of the over-saturation of polyester 20 to 30 years ago, some consumers maintain a negative perception about the fiber. But, that is changing. As with the other manufactured fibers, new developments in polyester have created a new attitude towards manufactured fibers. This is true, not only for manufacturers and designers, but also for consumers. In addition, when polyester is blended with other dry-clean only fibers, like wool, acetate, or rayon, the durability of the blended fabric improves and, in some cases, the fabrics can even be made washable, if the percentage of polyester is high enough.

#### **RAYON (VISCOSE)**

Rayon is a manufactured fiber based from wood pulp. Rayon's characteristics soft and comfortable, drapes well and is highly absorbent. Dyes and prints well. No static, no pilling problems. Fabric can shrink appreciably if washing dry-clean-only rayon. One of the major characteristics of rayon, also called viscose, centers around the care of the fabric. For those of you who have been around rayon a lot, you know that there are both washable and "dry clean only" rayon. Why are there both washable and non-washable rayons? Originally rayon was a "dry clean only" fiber. However, the fiber producers discovered that they could create wash ability in rayon by putting certain finishes on the surface of the fabric after it was knitted or woven. But this also added to the price. So, today many rayons in the marketplace remain untreated, and are therefore "dry clean only."