MEN'S SUITS
how to judge quality
This bulletin is intended primarily for the use of extension workers, teachers, and others who give information to families interested in better management of their incomes through improvement in purchasing. Included are facts regarding the fabric, construction, and appearance qualities currently found in men's suits, which the purchaser can consider in making a choice.

Much that affects the wearing quality, appearance, and fit of a man's suit is hidden. Certain values show up only with wear and cleaning. Consequently, there is no sure way to tell by examining a new suit whether it has all the particular qualities wanted and is a good buy for the price.

How then can a man buying a suit make a wise choice? He can learn how the various fibers used in suiting differ in their characteristics . . . what kinds of suitings are best for different kinds of wear . . . how suits of different grades are made and how materials and workmanship affect values . . . how to judge fit.
The Outer Cloth

One of the first things to consider is the outer cloth—how it looks and feels. Experts, whose fingers through long experience have become sensitive to quality, can judge a fabric more or less accurately by its “hand” (or feel) and its looks, but feel and overall appearance can be deceiving, even to experts. New fibers, special finishes, and modern manufacturing techniques produce cloth that is not always what it appears to be, either in fiber content or quality. Also, the skill with which even the poorest suits are pressed and displayed can make the materials look much better than they are.

Even so, there are facts to be learned about suitings that will serve as a guide to quality. It is helpful to know the nature of the different fibers they contain, to be able to identify the commonly used types of suitings, and to know the advantages and disadvantages of each. Mistakes in choice can be avoided by knowing what kinds of fabrics stand up best with wear and cleaning . . . which resist wrinkles and hold a press . . . which are least likely to become shiny . . . which will be most comfortable and practical through a hot summer.

Fiber-Content Labels

Information about the fibers in a suiting is often given on a label or tag. If the fabric contains any wool, the Wool Products Labeling Act of 1939, a Federal law, requires that each piece of the suit be labeled with the following information:

1. Wool fiber content: the kind of wool and the amount of it in the suiting; 2. the percentage, if any, of fibers other than wool; 3. the name of the manufacturer or persons selling the suit, or the registered number of the manufacturer, together with the name of the retailer or wholesaler. Facts on the tag refer only to the outer cloth, not to linings or materials that make up the foundation of the coat front.

The wool in suitings is most likely to be fleece wool from sheep. Other fibers classified as wool by the Act, and used in suitings, are mohair, cashmere, and alpaca.

Terms used on labels to describe the kind of wool in a suiting—“wool,” “reprocessed wool,” and “reused wool”—indicate only whether the fibers are new or used. Quality depends on the characteristics of the fibers—their length, fineness, strength, crimp, elasticity, and luster.

Cloth labeled “wool,” “all-wool,” or “100-percent wool,” is made from new fibers or fibers reclaimed from manufacturers’ clippings of knit goods. “Virgin wool” applies only to fibers never before spun into yarn. The Act does not require that it be labeled in any way except as “wool”; a fabric labeled as “virgin wool” may or may not be better than one labeled “wool.”

“Reprocessed wool” describes fibers reduced from woven or felted wool fabrics—chiefly manufacturers’ clippings—that have never been worn or used. Though reprocessing breaks and shortens the fibers somewhat, suitings made from them may give good wear.

“Reused wool” means that the fibers were reclaimed from knitted, woven, or felted materials—clothing, blankets, and the like—that have been worn or used. Though reprocessing breaks and weakens the fibers, they generally are blended with stronger wool fibers when spun into yarn.

No Federal law requires the labeling of fabrics made entirely of fibers other than wool. The Fair Trade Practice Rules promulgated by the
Federal Trade Commission, however, state that if fiber content of materials made of or containing rayon, acetate, linen, or silk is given, the fibers should be listed in order of decreasing percentage composition. For example, a listing of a suiting’s fiber content as acetate-rayon-nylon means that the material contains more acetate than either rayon or nylon, and more rayon than nylon.

**Natural Fibers**

**Wool.**—Wool suitings and the fibers from which they are made fall into two classes—worsteds and woolens.

In worsted the fibers are combed to take out short fibers and make longer ones lie parallel. Fibers then are twisted into a yarn that is even, fine, and strong. Two or more of these single yarns may be twisted together to make a plied yarn. Many worsteds are made with two-ply warp (lengthwise yarns) and single filling (crosswise yarns); better grades may be two-ply in both warp and filling.

Worsteds are generally close woven, hard finished, smooth, and supple. If you squeeze one in your hand, it will spring back into place as soon as you release it. Examples are all-wool gabardine, sharkskin, and unfinished worsteds. Worsted yarns are not combed; they contain both short and long fibers, which lie crisscrossed. Most woolen yarns are single strand and loosely twisted into a ply. Two or more plies may be twisted together to make a plied yarn.
twisted. The cloths made from them are not as serviceable as worsteds, but they lend themselves to napping and to the casual styling that many men like. Some woolen yarns, however, are two-ply and tightly twisted; these make tough suitings.

In general, woolen suitings are softer and less firmly woven than worsteds. They do not keep their shape or hold a press as well, but on the other hand they do not wrinkle as readily.

Typical woolens are tweed and twist. These and similar suitings are easily cheapened with harsh, inferior wool fibers, or they may be a blend of wool with fibers other than wool. It is well to examine them carefully; check the fiber-content label, and read such information as the manufacturer has provided.

**Cotton.**—As men’s interest in summer comfort increases, so does the use of cotton in suitings. All-cotton is cool and comfortable for hot, humid weather, but without special finishing, it is easily rumpled, needs frequent pressing and laundering. Soil-resistant and wrinkle-resistant finishes help overcome these disadvantages. Since all of these finishes are not equally lasting it pays to look for a tag that assures you of a durable finish.

Cotton is often blended with manmade fibers such as Orlon and Dacron, in suitings. The special advantage of these blends is that the fibers complement each other. Orlon and Dacron in right proportions contribute wrinkle resistance, dimensional stability, crease retention, and make a suiting easier to care for than one of all cotton. On the other hand, being nonabsorbent, these manmade fibers make warm fabrics—a disadvantage that can be overcome to some extent by cloth construction that provides ventilation. Also they are highly sensitive to heat and pressure, so are easily damaged in pressing; and they accumulate static electricity, which causes a suiting to cling to the body when the air is cool and dry. Cotton in combination with them helps to overcome these undesirable qualities.

**Flax.**—Flax is used in all-linen and blended suitings. It is naturally absorbent, therefore cool, and it lends itself to attractive textured weaves. Its chief disadvantage is lack of resilience; fabrics made from it wrinkle easily. An all-linen suit requires an effective and durable wrinkle-resistant finish for best service. In blends, flax is most often combined with wool, mohair, and other fibers that supply resilience.

**Silk.**—Silk as a fiber for men’s suitings grows steadily in popularity because it makes a fabric that is soft, lightweight, comfortable, and handsome. Used alone it is expensive; it is not hard wearing.

In woolen yarns the fibers, short ones as well as long, are criss-crossed. They are not combed and are only loosely twisted.
In certain blends, however, even a small percentage of silk gives the suiting a soft hand and a pleasing texture, while other fibers may provide endurance. The fiber-content label will be helpful in judging such materials.

**Manmade Fibers**

Rayon, acetate, nylon, Dacron, Orion, Dynel, Vicara, and Acrylan are the manmade fibers used increasingly in suits for men. Experience is showing that these fibers generally function best when blended with each other or with natural fibers such as wool, mohair, silk, flax, or cotton. In blends, one fiber in proper proportions supplies qualities that another lacks, or it may counteract what is objectionable in another.

Rayon and acetate, oldest of the manmade fibers, each possess qualities that supplement the other, so they are widely used together in summer suitings. Both of these fibers are cool and inexpensive. However, since neither fiber is naturally resistant to wrinkling, rayon-acetate suitings require lasting wrinkle-resistant finishes for good service. Rayon and acetate are widely used also in blends with other fibers, both natural and manmade.

The newer manmade fibers are used mainly in blends, some of which have proved their worth
while others are still experimental. Research is in progress to determine the best use of each of these fibers—to find ways of counteracting such undesirable qualities as roughing up, pilling, glazing, and accumulating static electricity, and also to find out the proportions of any one fiber that must be used in certain blends to produce desired effects.

Suits made of materials containing 50 percent or more Dacron or Orlon will, if their patterns have been properly worked out, feel larger in certain places than those of wool in corresponding sizes. This is essential to your comfort. Unlike wool, these fibers lack give; therefore, the fullness ordinarily eased and shrunk in has to be removed and the patterns cut larger. Some of the places where suits of manmade fibers may feel large are: Through the shoulders, at the elbows, about the armholes, and in the crotch and the seat of the trousers.

Letting out seams in suitings of manmade fibers is often a problem because needle holes may be permanent. Seam creases also may be permanent unless pressing temperatures were kept very low when the suit was made.

It is important to get proper directions for the care of suits containing manmade fibers. All of those named here except rayon and Vicara are sensitive to heat and pressure, so they require special care in cleaning and pressing.

In some suits, woven labels bearing directions for care are sewed inside both coat and trousers, where they are always at hand. Or there may be a hang tag or pocket stuffer with specific instructions on care.

**Weave of the Fabric**

The way suiting is constructed—that is, the weave—is another thing to notice when considering a suit. Weaves most used in men's suitings are plain and twill.

Plain weave is the simpler, with lengthwise and crosswise yarns passed alternately over and under each other. Tropical worsteds and some tweeds show clearly this type of construction.

In twill weaves, crosswise yarns go over and under two or three of the warp yarns, forming fine diagonal lines as the weave develops. These lines can readily be seen in gabardine or sharkskin.

Whether plain or twill, a suiting may be firmly or loosely woven. In general, a fabric with a firm weave keeps its shape better, holds a press better, and is more durable than a fabric with a loose weave.

**Types of Suitings**

The fiber content, the type of yarn, the weave of the cloth, and the way it is finished, give a fabric its characteristic qualities.

On the next two pages are pictures and brief descriptions of types of fabrics commonly used in men's suits. Some of the fabrics with names that were once synonymous with wool, such as flannel and gabardine, now may be made from any one of a number of fibers or combinations of fibers. The descriptions given for the suitings illustrated, however, apply only to high-grade worsteds or woolens, unless other fibers are indicated.
Flannel.—May be worsted or woolen. Woolen flannel has a thick nap that almost hides the weave. Worsted flannel is finer, not so thick or heavily napped. It is more serviceable, has better appearance than woolen flannel.

Sharkskin.—A worsted twill. Neat, sturdy, practical—good for office wear. Light and dark yarns alternate lengthwise and crosswise. May be plain, striped, or patterned. Mends and spots do not show readily.


Semifinished or unfinished worsteds.—Smooth, soft, closely woven. Usually twill; sometimes plain woven. The term “unfinished” is misleading; these worsteds actually have a light nap, which helps prevent shine.

Tweed.—A rough, bulky woolen. Plain or twill weave. Warp yarns often white; crosswise yarns colored and nubby. Best qualities are very serviceable. Because they have a prickly texture, they are uncomfortable in any except cold climates.

Cheviot.—May be worsted or woolen, twill or plain weave. Resembles tweed but is finer and of lighter weight. Has a wiry hand. Substantial; stands rough wear, but does not hold creases and shape.
Shetland.—True Shetland is imported. “Shetland-type” suitings are more common. Resembles tweed but it is softer, lighter in weight, more loosely woven. Does not keep good shape or press.

Twist.—Plain-woven, rugged woolen. Both warp and filling yarns are tightly twisted. Resembles tweed. A twist is stiff compared with fine worsteds. Excellent for men who want an extra-hard-wearing suit.

Tropical worsted.—Lightweight, plain-woven, unnapped, porous, smooth, and soil resistant. Designed for spring and summer, but gaining favor for year-round wear. Good tropical resists wrinkles and gives good service.

Cord.—Popular summer suiting made with heavy, light-colored lengthwise cord yarns alternating with narrow stripes of finer, darker yarns. May be all-cotton or of manmade fibers. Generally inexpensive.

Shantung.—Originally all-silk, but many modern shantungs are made of fibers other than silk. Nubby filling yarns give texture. Lightweight and comfortable, but readily damaged by hard wear.

Seersucker.—Washable summer suiting. Has alternate plain and crepe stripes. All-cotton is cool but quickly rumpled. With Orlon or Dacron it may be less cool, but it resists wrinkles, retains creases, keeps trim appearance, and is easily cared for.

302118°—57—2
Shrinkage Resistance and Colorfastness

A satisfactory suiting, whatever the fiber, neither shrinks nor fades when given recommended care. Statements direct from the manufacturer are the best assurance that a suiting will not shrink or fade noticeably, but such statements are not furnished with all suits. The next best source of information is the salesman or department buyer.

If no information is available, it may help in making a choice to keep in mind that all materials used in high-grade clothes have been carefully shrunk, tested, and inspected. The cost of these processes has to be included in the price of the suit. However, thorough preshrinkage and fastness of color add so much to the value of a suit that they are well worth the additional cost.

In suits made to sell at a low price, materials are used just as they come from the cloth manufacturers. One lot may be shrunk satisfactorily and be colorfast, another may not. This may explain why one suit keeps its size, shape, and color, and another from the same source shrinks and fades.

In summer suiting, shrinkage may be a problem. One way to guard against it is to make sure that directions for cleaning or washing are carefully followed. Unless a suit is labeled washable, it is best to have it dry-cleaned. A suiting that looks washable may not be. Sleeve linings or construction materials within the coat may not be washable; if a single item, such as tape or interfacing, draws up or stretches, it can permanently ruin a suit's fit and appearance.

Warmth

In wool suitings, weight is the best guide to warmth. Twelve- to 14-ounce suitings are regarded as medium to heavy, suitable only for cold weather. Ten-ounce and lighter weights are usually designated for spring and summer, although many men now choose lightweight wools for year-round wear.

Weight is not a guide to the warmth of suitings of manmade fibers. Some manmade fibers are very strong; hence, they can be made up into thin, lightweight suitings. Such suitings are not necessarily cool. If they are made with a high percentage, or entirely, of nylon, Dacron, or Orlon, they may be as warm as heavier suitings of wool, or warmer. As yet there is no practical guide for judging the warmth of suitings that contain manmade fibers.

Color and Texture

For low-cost upkeep of a suit, mixtures are a better choice than plain colors, dark colors better than light. Mixtures don't show spots, shine, or mends as readily as plain colors do.

Although, ordinarily, a suiting with a smooth, slick texture sheds soil better than one that is ribbed, creped, or woven with slub yarns, a suiting of manmade fibers that accumulate static electricity will attract and hold soil regardless of texture. Static electricity is less of a problem in warm weather than in cold.

For hot weather, light colors are often preferred because they are cooler than dark colors. If light-colored summer suitings are too thin, however, colored or patterned shirts or shorts may show through them, and light may silhouette the figure. To judge transparency, lay the unlined back of the coat over darker suitings; extra materials in the coat front hide this fault.
**LININGS AND POCKETINGS**

**Linings.**—Most tailored suits are half or quarter lined. Those best for hot weather are skeleton lined.

Acetate twill is a much used body lining; it is inexpensive, even in good qualities, and stands up well with wear. Best qualities are made of very fine yarns; the weave is firm and close; and the hand is soft and supple. Poor qualities are coarse and loosely woven and the hand is crisp. Acetate linings, unless specially treated, sometimes lose color because of gas (or atmospheric) fading, even as the suit hangs in the shop.

Bemberg linings in plain, satin, or patterned weaves are used increasingly in better grades of suits. These linings have a soft hand and smooth texture; they are lightweight—in keeping with the new soft suitings, and they are not subject to gas fading.

Certain invisible qualities are important to any good suit lining. For example, colors should be fast to gas fading, to perspiration and cleaning, and to crocking—that is, rubbing off. Thorough shrinkage is necessary if a suit is to fit and look as well after cleaning as before.

---

**Good-quality linings (left) are made of fine yarns; the weave is close and firm; the hand is soft and supple. Poor-quality linings (right) are coarsely woven and have a crisp hand.**
Pocketings in suit coats.—Silesia is the familiar twilled cotton used in coat pockets of better grades of suits. In best qualities, it is closely woven twill, much like silk in hand and appearance. It is strong and lasting. In medium-grade suits, coarser cotton of the same type is used, while in the lowest grades, coat pocketing is usually plain-woven, sleazy cotton, crisp and slick with sizing. If crushed in the hand it wrinkles readily. With use and cleaning the sizing comes out, leaving limp, flimsy pocketing that soon wears out.

Pocketings in trousers—Among the materials for trouser pockets and facings of good-quality suits is closely woven twill cotton, which is thicker and has a more leathery hand than material used in pockets of the coats. In low-grade trousers, the pocketing is coarsely woven and filled with sizing. It softens with cleaning and is not durable.
WORKMANSHIP AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Both visible and invisible qualities of workmanship and the construction materials (which are those materials used between outer cloth and lining) have a definite effect on a suit's appearance, the way it fits and feels, and the way it holds up with wear and cleanings. These qualities vary as grades of suits range from high to low.

On pages 22 to 27 are illustrated differences that are typical of high-, medium-, and low-grade built-up suits—that is, suits with linings and inner construction for year-round wear. On pages 28 and 29, contrasting grades of strictly summer suits are shown.

All suits do not fit into the few grades that are illustrated. There are other grades between these, as well as grades that overlap the ones shown. However, knowledge of differences such as those shown by these contrasting suit qualities will be helpful in evaluating qualities in between.

Some knowledge of manufacturing practices and how they affect suit quality may also prove helpful in judging the worth of a suit. In the sections that follow, construction materials and workmanship on which the quality of a suit so largely depends are described.
Patterns
In the manufacture of high-grade suits skilled designers and highly trained pattern makers are employed. Patterns are carefully sized for comfort and free action, and include generous allowances at all outlet seams.

In the manufacture of low-grade suits neither designers nor skilled pattern makers are employed. Patterns are trimmed down in size as much as possible, and there are minimum seam allowances, frequently not enough for outlets. A suit made by such a pattern may not be comfortable, and it may prove to be a loss if the purchaser should at some time need to have it let out.

Preparation of Materials
Before the cloth for high-grade suits is cut, it is shrunk, inspected for flaws, and straightened, as are any of the construction materials that need such treatment. In the manufacture of low-grade suits, these steps are omitted.

Thorough shrinkage of all materials prevents the puckering and buckling that so often spoil the appearance of men’s suits.

Straightening of materials is essential to good cut. Unless lengthwise and crosswise yarns are at right angles to each other, a suit eventually will not hang properly. As soon as the material relaxes, as it will with wear and cleaning, the coat front may swing off center and trousers may twist.

Material with flaws is discarded in the making of high-grade suits. In low grades the flaws may be shifted into seams or inconspicuous places; these flaws may show when the imperfect material weakens.

Cutting
Suits of the very highest grades are cut singly by hand—a costly process. However, modern
equipment for spreading cloth and for cutting has made it possible to cut several layers at a time with a high degree of accuracy. This is contributing much to economy in production.

For high-grade suits patterns are laid accurately with the grain of the cloth. Plaids, checks, or stripes are precisely matched, crosswise as well as lengthwise. There are no piecings.

In cutting low-grade suits, cloth is piled high. Patterns are placed for economy of cloth—not always as they should be for a properly cut garment. Patterned suitings are matched only lengthwise, and trousers are pieced in the crotch. Accuracy is sacrificed for speed in cutting. Frequently, the grain of the cloth is pulled out of line as the pile of cloth sways when it is cut.

Although the matching of a patterned suiting does not affect service values of a suit, it is an indication that the entire suit has been made carefully. Places to check for the matching of patterned suitings are: Center back seam of coat, side seams, armhole seams, where the edge of the collar rolls over and meets the coat in back, front closing, pocket openings, and collar notches.

In high-grade clothes all materials are carefully inspected.

Highest grades of men's suits are cut precisely by hand, one at a time.

With modern equipment several layers of cloth can be cut accurately at one time.
Pattern is matched both lengthwise and crosswise in a high-grade suit. Check pattern matching at points shown here.

To check for piecings look on the outside of the crotch of the trousers. Cloth reinforcements usually cover piecing seams on the inside. Piecings do not affect the wearing quality of a suit. But because they are stiff and bulky, they may affect comfort and precise fit.

Sewing and Shaping

Men’s suits of high grade are sewed, pressed, and shaped by skilled craftsmen. Seams are evenly stitched with silk thread for strength and elasticity. It will give under stress without snapping. Thread is matched to the suiting in color and is colorfast.

After each sewing operation, good suits are carefully shaped and pressed, and the construction processes that follow make this shaping permanent.

Because much of the sewing in high-grade suits has always been done by hand for softness and flexibility, the term “hand-tailored” has come to be associated with fine workmanship. A “hand-tailored” label on a suit, however, is not a reliable guide to quality. It means only that the suit coat was made with at least 21 specified hand operations; there are no requirements for the quality of the work. The finest suits are made with many more than 21 hand operations, all expertly done.

High-grade handwork can be identified by stitches that are fine, close together, neat, and secure. In poor handwork, stitches are coarse, far apart, uneven, and insecure. Good machine sewing looks and wears far better than poor hand sewing.
Low-grade suits are hurriedly stitched together. Little time is taken for pressing, none for shaping. Handwork is limited to the few operations for which there are no machines.

Coat Fronts

In the regular built-up suits, the "coat front"—the foundation between outer cloth and linings—is perhaps the most complex part; the quality of materials and the quality of workmanship in it have a most important effect on the way a suit looks, fits, and wears throughout its lifetime.

In the best suits the coat front consists of carefully selected construction materials, shaped and sewed by skilled craftsmen. The basic or foundation material, often referred to as hair

Good interfacing feels springy when crushed in the hand (left). When released (center), it recovers quickly with no wrinkles. Low-grade interfacing (right), wrinkles badly and does not recover.
Squeeze the coat front in your hand. If materials and workmanship inside are of high grade as shown at right, the coat front will feel soft and springy, and will resume its shape quickly when released.

canvas or interfacing, is a highly resilient blend of worsted, goat hair, and cotton. It will feel soft, yet springy, if squeezed in the hand; and it will resume shape without a wrinkle when released.

Inside the collar is a specially developed linen which, like the front interfacing, never loses body. Collar and lapels are shaped by hand and sewed as shaped with hundreds of tiny padding stitches. A collar made this way keeps its shape permanently. It will always set up properly about the neck. Lapels will always roll back—never fall forward. These qualities can be detected by gently rolling forward a tip of the collar or lapel. If permanently shaped it will flip back into place immediately.

Shoulders of a good suit are slightly built up, but natural looking, with carefully shaped, soft, lightweight padding. Haircloth—a wiry, extremely resilient material of cotton and coarse hair—gives the shoulders a firm, straight line that will not break.

Thoroughly shrunk tape keeps the front edges of the coat and the armholes from stretching or puckering. This tape may be linen, silk, or bias cotton, depending on the nature of the outer cloth and the individual factory’s method. It is put in so that the coat edges, when pressed, will be thin and sharp, with the seam very slightly to the underside.
Along the roll of the lapels is the bridle stay. This holds the chest fullness, which is evenly eased in by hand, then pressed. This construction makes the V-line—the line formed by the roll of the lapels—set close to the body regardless of how the wearer bends or moves about.

In low-grade suits coat fronts are in striking contrast to those in suits of high quality. Foundation material may be a canvaslike cotton or burlap, neither of which is resilient. If squeezed in the hand, there is none of the resiliency found in high-grade clothes.

Collar interlining is sized cotton, which soon softens and leaves the collar limp. There is no hand shaping of the collar and lapels. If you roll the tips, they will not flip back into place as in high-grade suits.

Machine stitching, which is less flexible than handstitching, holds the coat and its foundation together. The lower the grade of suit, the skimpier is this stitching.

No haircloth is used to keep shoulders from breaking. Pads tend to be heavy and oversized, with little shaping. In time they hump and sag at the sleeve head. Differences in shoulder padding are noticeable when you try on coats of different grades; you can also easily feel the difference with your fingers.

Tape ordinarily is not shrunk. As a result, front coat edges and armholes may stretch or pucker after the suit is cleaned. Along the coat edges this tape is sewed in with the seams and interfacings, making stiff, thick edges that become even more bulky as the free edge of the tape rolls.

Because chest fullness is not eased to the bridle stay, the V-line of a low-grade coat tends to buckle out as the wearer bends. This can easily be noticed when a suit is tried on.

In strictly summer (washable) suits, coat-front construction is much simpler than in regular built-up suits, and workmanship is not as detailed. Linings and paddings are reduced to a minimum—or omitted if the suiting has good body.

This simplified construction, of course, makes for coolness and ease of laundering. A strictly summer suit, however, cannot be expected to keep as trim an appearance as a well-made built-up suit.

Machine stitching replaces hand shaping and stitching in medium- and low-grade suits. The lower the grade, the less stitching.
Coat Pockets

Pocket openings in high-grade suit coats are reinforced inside with lightweight linen for durability. The reinforcement is then securely tacked to the coat foundation, which takes the strain of use and protects the pockets against torn ends and baggy openings. This safeguard is omitted in low-grade suits.

Coat Sleeves

The way coat sleeves hang is a visible guide to quality of workmanship. For comfort and for good appearance as well, sleeves must be set so that they bisect the side pockets; that is, so that the front fold of the sleeves comes to the middle of the pocket as the sleeves hang naturally. Otherwise, they will restrict the upper arm uncomfortably and wrinkle badly. Notice both sleeves; in lower grades of suits the two sleeves frequently hang differently.

In the best suits, sleeves are carefully shaped and rolled, with no pressed-in creases. Crosswise wrinkles—unavoidable at the bend of the arms as a suit is worn—are accentuated when sleeves are creased lengthwise.

Coat Linings

The way the lining is put in a coat is another visible indication of quality. In suits of good quality, the lining is smoothly but easily fitted, without wrinkles, and invisibly handstitched with matching silk thread. Sleeve linings are smoothly eased to the armholes and stitched in place with very fine close stitches. At the lower edge of the coat a small fold over the hem provides give. This fold is high enough so there is no chance of the lining showing below the coat’s edge.

In low-grade suits linings are likely to be wrinkled because they are not carefully fitted. Sleeve fullness often is bunched about the armholes and coarsely stitched with heavy cotton thread. Lower edge pleats are skimpy and may hang below the coat because the hem is skimpy also.

Buttonholes

In the best suits, buttonholes are worked by hand for flexibility, and are skillfully made. However, it should not be concluded that all hand-worked buttonholes are good. Machine-made buttonholes may be equally serviceable—some-
times even more so—but they are less flexible. Points that indicate well-made buttonholes are close even stitching on the underside as well as on top, a firm edge, and well-reinforced ends.

**Trousers**

In good suits trousers compare well with the coats in overall appearance and quality of construction. This is not always so in low-grade suits.

Whether trousers always set up well about the waist or break and slip down below a belt depends largely on the interfacing. Linen has permanent body, which assures that the waistband will always set well—never break down and wrinkle between belt supports. These supports are evenly spaced and neatly applied. Pockets are generous in size and twice-stitched with cut edges enclosed.

Trousers of low-grade suits may feel firm about the waist, but this is only temporary firmness. The interfacing are highly sized cotton instead of linen. Sizing comes out in the first cleaning, leaving the waistband soft and limp. Pockets are skimped in size and poorly made.

**GOOD FIT IN A SUIT**

A good-fitting suit not only looks better and feels better than one that fits poorly, but it also wears better and costs less for upkeep.

Let the clothier measure you for size and determine your body proportions. From years of studying men's proportions, manufacturers have developed a wide range of sizes and size variations—regular, short, long, short stout, long stout, and many more. In general, the higher the grade of suit, the greater the number of variations.

Better grade suits are fuller cut than the poorer grades. A man who takes size 40, for example, in a high-grade suit may need a 42 in one of lower quality.

The model, or style, of a suit also may influence fit. Though styles in men's suits do not change rapidly or drastically, new models are endorsed each year by the International Association of Clothing Designers, and these, with variations, are used by all clothing manufacturers. It may be to your advantage to ask about and try on the different models to see which looks best on you. By knowing the current models, a suit that would soon be outdated can be avoided.

In making certain of a good and comfortable fit, it is advisable to try on the whole suit—coat, trousers, and vest, if there is one. It is also helpful to stand naturally while viewing the front, back, and sides, and to see how the suit feels in action . . . as you walk about naturally . . . step up and down . . . flex your arms . . . bend . . . sit and cross your knees.

Few men can buy readymade suits that need no alterations. Minor alterations, such as lengthening or shortening sleeves, lowering or raising the collar, or lifting a shoulder with additional padding, are to be expected.

Major alterations, such as shortening a coat or resetting the sleeves, are never advisable. And under no conditions should a suit proportioned for one type of body build be reworked for another; it will never fit satisfactorily. All major alterations, of course, are costly.

**MADE-TO-MEASURE SUITS**

For the man who has trouble in finding a ready-made suit in the size, model, and material he wants, the “made-to-measure” or “tailored-to-measure” suit may be the solution. These suits, bought through retailers, are made by manufacturers known as tailors to the trade. Chief advantage in buying a suit this way is the chance of more personal fit and the avoidance of alteration costs. Disadvantages are the uncertainties that go with special orders—and waiting.

When you buy a made-to-measure suit, the retailer takes your measurements and you choose the model and the suiting you want. On receiving the order, the manufacturer selects the proper pattern and incorporates in it any special measurements that may be requested. The suit is cut, basted together, and sent back to be tried on. After a fitting, the suit is returned to the factory for finishing. If a skillful fitting job was done, the finished suit probably will need no alterations, or only minor ones.

Standards of making made-to-measure suits vary, so there is a wide range in quality, just as in ready-to-wear suits.
HIGH-GRADE

MEDIUM-GRADE

LOW-GRADE

COAT FRONTS
1. Foundation
Interfacing of worsted, goat hair, and cotton. Highly resilient, it keeps coat front permanently trim. Weight depends on suiting.

2. Lapels
Permanently hand-shaped with fine padding stitches. Lapels always roll back to the coat, never fall forward.

3. Shoulders
Haircloth, thin soft felt, lightweight padding—permanently shaped with handstitching. Shoulders straight and firm; chest rounds smoothly.

4. Collar interfacing
Specially made linen, shaped by hand and stitched by hand to undercollar. Collar turns over smoothly; will set properly to neck for lifetime of suit.

5. Bridle stay
Chest fullness eased evenly to stay helps make coat comfortable. V-line holds tape to chest. Handstitching keeps edges of tape flat.

6. Taping
Narrow, thin, thoroughly shrunk. Linen, cotton, or silk—straight or bias, depending on suiting. Handstitched along edges inside seam line to thin coat edges that cannot pucker or stretch. Armholes taped, with necessary sleeve ease carefully adjusted.

7. Pockets
Generous size, neatly made of soft, fine, durable cotton. Openings reinforced with thin linen. Securely hand-tacked to foundation to relieve outer cloth of strain.

HIGH-GRADE

MEDIUM-GRADE
Caarser, lower grade interfacing. Rayon may replace some of the wool. Coat will not keep new appearance as long.

LOW-GRADE
Caarse cattan or burlap interfacing. Nat resilient. Coat will lose shape with wear and cleaning.

No shaping — machine-stitched. Very little stitching. Lapels will become limp, fall forward, and sag.

Cheap, lumpy padding and paperlike felt — no haircloth, little stitching. Coat front will break.

Sleazy, sized cattan, skimpily stitched by machine. Collar neither turns over smoothly nor sets well to neck.

Some chest fullness eased to stay, but not evenly. V-line may buckle as suit is worn. Tape machine-stitched an edges—will remain flat.

Na chest ease—V-line of coat will buckle out. Tape stitched only in center by machine—edges will roll with cleanings.

Sleazy cattan tape stitched with canvas in edge seams rolls and makes very thick coat edge. Will not take a sharp press.

Small, poorly stitched, made of sized cattan. Not tacked to foundation. Outer cloth is easily strained, may tear at pocket ends, let openings sag.
INSIDE THE COAT

HIGH-GRADE

MEDIUM-GRADE

LOW-GRADE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>HIGH-GRADE</strong></th>
<th><strong>MEDIUM-GRADE</strong></th>
<th><strong>LOW-GRADE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Letter pocket</td>
<td>Precisely made, smooth and flat.</td>
<td>Made less precisely, but well.</td>
<td>Uneven, badly sewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Manufacturer's identification</td>
<td>Label below letter pocket identifies manufacturer.</td>
<td>Same suits carry label of manufacturer below letter packet; others carry store label instead.</td>
<td>Label does not name manufacturer. He is identified only by a number on the size ticket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seams</td>
<td>Usually booked (turned and invisibly stitched). Generous outlets at center back and sides. Silk thread for strength and give. Thread is carefully matched to color of suiting.</td>
<td>Often booked, particularly if suiting contains man-made fibers. Frequently piped (bound) to match lining. Small outlets. Matched cotton thread.</td>
<td>Piped with material not same as lining. No allowance for outlets. Thread is cotton; it is not matched to suiting and may not be colorfast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hem</td>
<td>Booked to match seam finish. May be stitched over lining in front, or lining may be turned down over hem. Wide enough so lining will not show below coat.</td>
<td>Booked or piped to match seams. May be finished the same as high-grade suits, but often hems are not so wide.</td>
<td>Piped in back. Front hems skimpy; lining sewed over hems may show below coat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Buttonholes</td>
<td>Skillfully handworked with silk twist. Stitches close and even. Flexible and strong, neatly outlined, fine in appearance.</td>
<td>Worked by hand or machine. Machine work is less flexible but more lasting than handwork ordinarily found on medium-grade suits.</td>
<td>Machine-worked with cotton thread that often fades. End reinforcement sometimes omitted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## TROUSERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIGH-GRADE</th>
<th>MEDIUM-GRADE</th>
<th>LOW-GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Waist</strong></td>
<td>Interfacing of linen, which resists crushing, makes comfortable waistband that sets well permanently. Facing of soft durable cotton with silklike texture, hand-hemmed to trousers.</td>
<td>Cotton interfacing, which does not preserve set of waist. Facing is durable pocketing, machine-stitched with stitch that looks much like hand hemming.</td>
<td>Interfacing of sleazy sized cotton, which loses body, lets waistband crush and wrinkle. Facing is poorer quality pocketing, machine-hemmed to trousers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Pockets</strong></td>
<td>Generous size, convenient shape, evenly cut. Closed seams. Pocketing is closely woven durable cotton with very soft, leathery hand.</td>
<td>Less generous size; not shaped or sewed as carefully as in high-grade. Closed seams. Pocketing durable and leathery but less fine and soft than in high-grade suits.</td>
<td>Skimped in size, unevenly cut and sewed. Closed seams. Pocketing heavily sized, not lasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Fly and crotch</strong></td>
<td>Smoothly faced with pocketing. Facing extended to reinforce crotch line. No piecings in crotch. Cotton reinforcements stitched in with back rise and inseams.</td>
<td>Some construction as in high-grade suits. Difference is in quality of material and workmanship. Crotch usually pieced; little reinforcement in crotch and seat.</td>
<td>Facings are made of a variety of materials. Poor construction; pieced crotch, covered with bulky cotton. Little reinforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Buttons for suspenders</strong></td>
<td>Good quality, evenly spaced, and sewed on securely.</td>
<td>Good quality, evenly spaced, sewed on securely.</td>
<td>Cheap quality, not evenly spaced or securely sewed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUITING soils readily. It is difficult to wash clean and to press neatly. Finish is temporary; suiting will soon become limp and will then be easily rumpled. Suiting will shrink. Colors are not fast.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS—interfacing, pocketings, facings, tapes, shoulder paddings—will fray, pull out, and shrink.

LINING. Lining in sleeves makes suit maintenance difficult. Lining and suit material do not shrink equally; therefore, alterations will be necessary after washing to restore presentable appearance.

WORKMANSHIP is weak and unpresentable. Cannot withstand repeated washings. Makes suit difficult to press smoothly.
SUATING is resistant to soil and easy to wash. It is presentable with little pressing. It is lightweight but not so thin that clothing underneath shows through. Firm, permanent bond will last through repeated washings. Suiting is resistant to wrinkling, will not shrink or stretch, and is colorfast to light, perspiration, and washing.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS—interfacings, pocketings, facings, tapes, shoulder padding—are lightweight and durable. Trouser waistband interfacing is permanently firm. All of these construction materials have the same dimensional stability when washed as the suiting.

LINING. Suit is skeleton lined of self material. There are no sleeve linings. This type of lining contributes to summer comfort and ease of maintenance. Lining washes as well as the suiting does.

WORKMANSHIP inside and out is neat and durable; it can withstand both wear and washing. Lines of construction are thin, particularly at edges and corners.
CHECKLIST FOR GOOD FIT

THE COAT
- Sets well with soft, but firm, unbroken shoulder line from neck to shoulder point.
- Hangs straight, front and back, from shoulders to lower edge with no unsightly wrinkles. Small vertical folds for shoulder and arm action should not be considered wrinkles.
- Collar sets close to the neck at back and sides with one-half inch or more of the shirt collar showing.
- Coat does not look too tight or feel too tight when it is buttoned.
- The waist is shaped only slightly.
- Coat long enough to cover seat of trousers—length proportionate to a man's height.
- Skirt of coat fits about hips easily and smoothly with no flare.
- Lapels roll neatly as the V-line holds close to the chest.
- Armholes fit easily, the arms can be raised without lifting the coat noticeably.
- Sleeves are one-fourth to one-half inch shorter than shirt sleeves, which should come to bend of wrist.

THE TROUSERS
- Smooth, easy fit about waist and hips.
- Hang straight from waist, are creased with the grain of the goods, both back and front. (This is easy to see if the suiting is coarsely woven or striped.)
- Comfortable, smooth seat.
- Legs just long enough for slight break at instep. Deep breaks make trousers look too large. Also, trousers that are too long rub the shoes in back, soon become soiled and worn.

THE VEST
- Fits down well over the top of the trousers. Shirt cannot show between trousers and vest.
Washington, D. C.
Issued February 1957

This publication is a revision of and supersedes
Miscellaneous Publication No. 688 \( (14-84M) \)
Buying Men's Suits

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office
Washington 25, D. C. - Price 25 cents