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GENTLEMAN STYLE

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FOREWORD

What was it that compelled a supply chain management specialist to write a book about Gentleman Style? Family background certainly played a part, as did personal development and serendipity. An affinity for the topic has indeed been passed down through our family: One of my grandmothers was trained as a seamstress in Vienna in the 1930s. When I was only one year old and had only just taken my first steps, she gave me my very first bespoke suit.

Besides the memory of grandparents who were always impeccably dressed, I have an early recollection of hearing the sentence "You either have taste or you don't – it cannot be acquired". Even in my youth, I had my doubts as to whether this could really be true. Later on, after university, I spent time looking into style and the codes associated with it. "Are there any rules governing good style?" was the guiding question that kept going over and over in my mind. Having always been careful with my money, I resisted the urge to simply buy a large quantity of clothes and experiment with them, and decided to research widely and thoroughly before trying anything on in a shop and making a purchase.

My first meeting with my future wife during a holiday in Italy happened purely by chance. Very soon, I was commuting on an almost weekly basis between Germany and her place of residence, which moved from Rome to Chieti, Arnhem, Amsterdam, and finally to somewhere near London. These journeys proved to be a catalyst for my interest in gentleman's style. During the past ten years, I have got to know different people, countries and cultures, and met innumerable well-dressed, interesting characters. Over time, I realised that most Italians have an innate sense of fashion and style, due to the fact that the *bella figura* plays an important role in society and everyday communication. In Italy, dress is much more than a means to an end, but an expression of pure *dolce vita*. I have also travelled to London on numerous occasions to find out more about the world of bespoke suits and shirts as well as the excellent British shoe tradition. On these trips, I met with various illustrious individuals from the tailoring profession.

I would like to share my fascination with Gentleman Style in the chapters that follow. Many times, during conversations on the topic, I have been urged to jot down my research and findings. I would also like to kindle some excitement among others, since – contrary to my grandparents' opinion – I believe that anyone can dress in a highly sophisticated way and work towards a well-groomed appearance. It's my explicit goal to provide anyone who'd like to know more with a sound overview of the market, as well as to distil and explain effective rules for style: Grammar rules for style, essentially. For those who are new to the world of style, the book provides orientation; aficionados and old hands at style will discover new perspectives and a level of detail that is not currently available in magazines and existing guidebooks.

Last but not least, there's a professional curiosity concerning manufacturers and the craft: for many years, I have admired the passion and perfection that the small English and Italian manufacturers in particular inject into their exceptional goods.

The result of all of this is the book in front of you. What else do you need to know? Some topics have been included for the sake of completeness – for instance, formal wear such as a coat with tails or a dinner jacket. These items are rarely used in practice. Most people seldom have the opportunity to wear such fine clothes. However, especially given the glamour of such rare occasions, it is worthwhile to make a sound style choice. If you are currently planning your own wedding, a closer look at formal, festive wear might be useful. Timeless classics such as the morning suit or dinner jacket guarantee that the wedding pictures will look as stylish in thirty years' time as they do now.

Where necessary, the book prescribes clear style guidelines; otherwise, it avoids dictating a set of binding rules. Some passages give advice on how to put together a comprehensive wardrobe, or grooming.

Should you feel so inclined, you could draft and tick off a checklist based on these rules. It is, however, not my wish to dictate a clear-cut, stylish costume for everyday use. The book is intended as a starting point for your own research and for developing your own sense of style, which should be in tune with your own personality and the respective occasion. This is the only way to feel comfortable in your own skin, which will be noticed by others. And this is precisely what Gentleman Style is supposed to be!

I hope you find this book stimulating and enjoyable,

Spencer ten Brink, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

SUITS

"I prefer to use a bespoke tailor. He knows my taste, I know his taste, and Herr Schmitz, the cutter, knows both our tastes. It's time-consuming, expensive and old-fashioned. However, it works for the three of us. And the fittings are a right old laugh."

Erich Kästner, "When I was a little boy"

Until 50 years ago, no other piece of clothing could challenge the classic dress suit's claim to the universal gold standard of men's style. However, the suit now seems to have fallen out of favour with the Zeitgeist. When it comes to dress conventions, there has been a marked drop in standards in recent decades. In the workplace the suit has mainly been replaced by casual slacks, or even jeans, combined with a dress shirt and a plain suit jacket. The reasons for this development seem obvious: lower costs and higher levels of comfort. So why own a perfectly fitted suit or even several? Some Englishmen might drily reply: "Standards have to be maintained." A suit is generally considered to be appropriate for formal occasions such as business. Style-conscious gentlemen, however, appreciate a well-cut suit even when they're off the clock, for both the city and the countryside. A definite plus of a well-cut suit is that it gives the wearer a very elegant silhouette. It symbolises a respectable lifestyle and exudes respect for other people. In some cases it encapsulates all aspects of classic style. Style manifests itself in many aspects of a suit, so please be invited to thoroughly familiarise yourself with this item of clothing.

There is some good news, though. Even at the beginning of the 21st century, the main design elements have remained largely unchanged. We have nearly every cut variant that has been developed over the last 100 years at our disposal.

One perplexing fact: while fashion comes and goes, a well preserved, 50-year-old suit still looks attractive even today. Old photographs of celebrities and dignitaries show that only minor design details have changed.

Luxury brand Kiton exhibits a number of original suits worn by the Duke of Windsor (probably the most famous dandy in the 20th century) at its headquarters in Naples. It is immediately evident that these wonderful gems could easily be worn today, albeit using a lighter fabric.

THE CUT

Before you start to think about the fit, you must first deal with the matter of the style of suit you wish to wear. One of the criteria for this is the number of buttons: The jacket can have either one or two vertical rows of buttons. There are then variants of these two basic forms with different numbers of buttons. As far as the effect is concerned, the following applies: Double-breasted jackets are more elegant, since the buttons are always fastened. Single-breasted ones are less formal and therefore more widely used. The rules stating that double-breasted are for slimmer men and single-breasted jackets are for bigger men are yesterday's news. There is only one real rule: The suit has to fit your own body. If we then consider the fit, the most important question is then: Should the suit have a wide cut, or should it be snug-fitting? The narrow, snug fit is currently the fashion. On the other hand, a looser fitting wide cut which can elegantly compensate for natural

weight fluctuations would be more sensible. A cut that is too narrow is not advisable for persons with a stocky build. In the business world, suits that are too wide are being worn in an increasing number of cases. The sleeves and trouser legs often tend to be too long on men rather than too short. A tailor can easily correct either of these problems. In order to evaluate the fit, it is worth examining other details. The shoulder area is one of the main factors that determine whether a suit fits correctly. The jacket should sit on the shoulders as naturally as possible, i.e. the padding should surround the shoulder area harmoniously and not be too bulky. The shoulders should not look too wide or too narrow in relation to the size of the head. It also looks more elegant if the sleeves hang loosely, without shoulder or upper arm muscles standing out. A high-sitting, relatively small armhole can elegantly highlight the Y-silhouette of the chest and back. The length of the jacket is also important for proportions, and can vary by several centimetres depending on the fashion. Jackets which completely cover the posterior are timeless. In order to have the correct width, pull on one of the buttons with the jacket fastened. Between 3 and 5 centimetres of clearance in the stomach area is fine. On the other hand, the jacket is too tight if diagonal folds form around the button or tightening occurs at the waist or hips. The button should ideally sit a couple of centimetres above the navel. The closed button produces an attractive Y-silhouette here, at the narrowest part of the waist. Unfortunately you seldom get a good view of your own back in the mirror. But the jacket has to fit here too. Horizontal creases between the shoulder blades are a clear indication that the jacket is too narrow. If there is insufficient padding, unsightly creases may occur around the armhole on the back if the shoulders droop excessively. And just a few words about the collar: The collar of the jacket should fit tightly against the shirt collar. The shirt collar, in turn, should protrude above the collar of the jacket by about one centimetre.

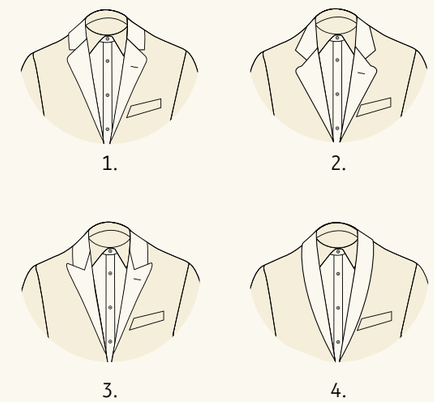
The correct fit of the trousers is easier to determine. They should not be too tight at the posterior or the front of the hips, otherwise unsightly horizontal creases will occur. The legs should be cut wide enough to conceal knock knees or bandy legs. The higher the waistband sits on the stomach, the more elegantly 'lengthened' the legs will appear in comparison to the torso.

Examples of different jacket designs: button columns, position of buttons, lapel options and shoulder design

Two-button, single-breasted all-year-round jacket

Double-breasted suit with two pairs of closing buttons made from light wool

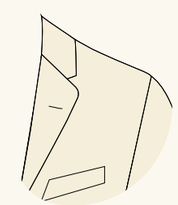
Lapel options



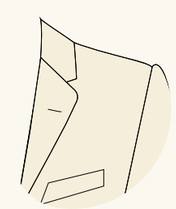
The lapel and the roll line are details that are often overlooked:

1. Narrow, notched lapel
2. Wide, deeper falling lapel
3. Peaked lapel (narrow or wide), frequently used in modern double-breasted suits
4. Shawl collar, frequently used for tuxedos

The shoulder design has a considerable influence on the wearer's silhouette:



Soft shoulder means a naturally sloped shoulder design, with little or no padding in the shoulder. The result is an elegantly flowing, relaxed silhouette.



High and square shoulder with clearly visible roped sleeves. The result is relatively militaristic and at the same time dynamic and forceful.

MATERIAL AND FABRICS

The next major question after the cut is the choice of suit fabric. What do I need to look out for? There is a lot of confusion surrounding fabrics. Manufacturers have introduced fancy-sounding terms and descriptions for their fabrics, thereby justifying higher prices. Under no circumstances should you resort to a suit made from an artificial fibre, and 100 Euro "bargains" are best avoided. Five main types of fabric are available, subject to preference and budget.

1. **Wool** (worsted and woollen yarn)
2. **Mohair** (mix)
3. **Cashmere** (mix)
4. **Cotton** (seersucker, moleskin, corduroy etc.)
5. **Linen**

Cloth weight vs. super wool

There is a common fallacy when judging the quality of wool: the persistent myth that super-100 + x wool is a reliable indicator of quality. Many buyers believe a suit made of super-150 wool is something rather special. They are wrong, and the only reliable fact is that a suit such as this will wear extremely quickly. Additional explanation is required in order to address the common super-wool misunderstanding. The number on the label in the suit lining indicates the thread count of the wool used. "Super-100" means that 100 metres of the thread weighs one gramme. Therefore, the higher the number, the finer the thread. This means that a super-200 thread is twice as fine as a super-100 thread, and much more expensive. The delicacy of the fibre results in disproportionally higher costs. Wool isn't like a Mercedes-Benz car, whereby E500 on the tailgate means that you have a powerful V8 engine, whereas E200 means that you have the four-cylinder economy model. As far as wool is concerned, the finer the yarn, the sooner the trousers are going to wear out in areas such as the pockets, the posterior and the belt loops. The workmanship of the material is a much more relevant factor than the thread count. Cheaply manufactured 130-wool can be inferior to a traditionally woven, British 100-wool in every respect.

An important number that will not be found on a ready-to-wear suit is the cloth weight per metre, which is a major indicator of comfort. The lighter the fabric, the more comfortable the suit is on a hot day. However, thinner fabrics (e.g. 220 grammes/metre) are prone to creasing, and will lose shape more quickly. A well-fitted suit for all year round made from pure wool should weigh about 300 grammes/metre. Mohair from the Angora goat is a suitable alternative, which usually weighs less and is finer than ordinary wool. Cashmere is appropriate for suit jackets, less so for two-piece or three-piece suits. The fabric made from the hair of the Cashmere goat is too sensitive for trousers. Suits can also be made from cotton or linen. Usually cotton is much cheaper than animal fabrics and not quite as supple. It can also look quite casual. Linen, which is made from hemp fibre, is notorious for its tendency to crease, which relegates this fabric to casual and leisure wear.

Tweed is the quintessentially British woollen fabric with a rich thready texture, making it ideal for jackets. Colours such as moss green, charcoal or dark blue are the most versatile. Furthermore, green, brown and blue tweeds with patterns such as herringbone twill, check, houndstooth, gun club check, and Donegal in contrasting colours are also very popular choices. The wide range of names for colours and patterns can be quite confusing sometimes. A name may be derived from the breed of sheep (e.g. Cheviot or Shetland), the geographical origin (e.g. Donegal and Harris), or reflect how it has predominantly been used (e.g. gamekeeper, thornproof, sporting tweed). In any case, tweed is an extremely robust fabric that provides serious value for money.

Which colours and patterns are suitable for which occasion? Classic business colours consist of black, charcoal/grey, navy and dark brown. The main advantage of plain colours is their neutrality, which is to say that they are rarely obtrusive. However, they can seem a little boring at times. Some style aficionados like to spice up plain colour suits with bolder shirts and tie patterns. For leisure plain colours also work best, but the colour palette can include lighter colours such as white, beige, and all sorts of light blues and greys.

Business fabrics for winter made from 420 gramme per metre wool: (1) Navy with pinstripes, (2) light grey, (3) medium blue, (4) medium grey with pinstripes, (5) medium grey with nailhead pattern, (6) black with chalk stripes, (7) medium blue hopsack, (8) charcoal with herringbone pattern

Light summer fabric from 230 gramme per metre wool: (1) brown herringbone, (2) charcoal check, (3) Prince of Wales check black and white, (4) navy blue with pinstripes, (5) brown birdseye, (6) light grey with chalk stripes

Typical colours for tweed are brown, green, and blue. A contrasting check colour underlines the casual nature of tweed.

Cloth makers

It is, of course, useful to be familiar with the most well-known cloth manufacturers, especially in order to understand the difference in price, which is sometimes considerable. As mentioned above, the quality of the fabric is primarily a result of the manufacturing methods that are used; the yarn count is only of secondary importance. The best suit fabrics come from Great Britain and Italy.

A selection of famous manufacturers and brands

BRITISH	Holland & Sherry (widely used by tailors, luxury fabrics)
	Fox Brothers (famous for flannels)
	Harrisons of Edinburgh (distributors of the legendary H. Lesser fabric)
	Huddersfield Fine Worsteds (Savile Row standard: Hunt & Winterbotham, Hardy Minnis)
ITALIAN	Loro Piana (luxury fabrics, fine cashmere)
	Fratelli Tallia di Delfino (quality mill from Biella)
	Emernegildo Zegna (long-standing tradition)
	Cerutti (specialising in fine fabrics)
	Vitale Barberis Canonico (setting highest quality standards since 1683)
OTHER	Dormeuil (large fabric distributor and manufacturer from France)
	Scabal (Belgian cloth maker, also makes suits)

Inner lining

As well as the fabric, let's take a look at the lining. It is usually made from viscose – i.e. artificial silk – sometimes from cotton and, more rarely, from natural silk. Whereas off-the-peg suits often come in dull, plain colours, expensive made-to-measure and bespoke suits provide an unlimited range of fabrics, colours, and patterns.

Luxury tailor Rubinacci from Naples lines his suits with printed natural silk on request. Some might consider this decadent and point out, perhaps somewhat jealously, that silk is less robust than viscose. Don't listen to them. Silk lining can be just as durable. Customers value luxurious detail such as this, and it is precisely this detail that ultimately sets a 4,000 Euro suit apart from the others, which leads us to one of the most exciting topics – the different production methods used in making a suit.

Colourful patterns for sports jackets are Kiton's trademark

Stile napoletano: plain blue on the outside, playful colour explosion on the inside

- **Emanuel Berg** – represented in many capitals around the world
- **Van Laack** – available all over Germany, expanding internationally
- **Barba, Borelli and Finamore** – three outstanding shirt brands from Naples, Italy, which are available from various retailers
- **Charvet** – France, Paris
- **Swann & Oscar** – France, Paris
- **Les dandys** – France, Paris
- **Brooks Brothers** – USA, also now available in Europe
- **Paul Stuart** – USA, New York City, Chicago and Washington DC

STYLISH COMBINATIONS

A white shirt is the best complement to a business suit. White matches all of the most popular suit colours of charcoal, grey, blue, or brown like no other colour. White has always been associated with purity and harmony, two key factors when it comes to integrating additional accessories such as neckties. No other colour comes close for the sheer number of matching options. Blue, red, green or yellow neckties and navy blue or charcoal suits are an excellent combination. White is also the only colour that hides sweat stains under the armpits to some extent. The darker the shirt, the more obtrusive the stain. Gentlemen who have a predisposition for heavy perspiration are therefore advised to opt for white. Blue shirts, a strong contender for most popular shirt colour, are the next best choice.

The advantage of blue is that there's less of a stark contrast between necktie colour and shirt than with white. Moreover, colours such as white and blue are less visually intrusive without looking boring. This is different in the case of a striped shirt, which can't be worn every week because business partners are more likely to remember it. Cream coloured shirts are only rarely bought, which is unfortunate because they deserve more attention. Cream coloured shirts exude natural elegance and flatter the wearer's complexion. Other less frequently worn variants are light pink, green or grey, colours which are ideal for brightening up your wardrobe and can be a welcome change from the usual white-blue routine.

If you're looking for something a little more individual, striped shirts are a good option. They add some variety to your plain coloured collection. The most popular combination by far is blue and white. Fine pink, red, or green stripes work really well, too. Be careful when it comes to the width of the stripes. Stripes that are too bold ("butchered or candy striped") can appear quite flashy when worn by slender gentlemen. Thinner stripes ("Bengal") are more elegant and should be the preferred choice. Of course, striped shirts provide fewer necktie options. A striped shirt and a plain coloured tie can be matched in the following manner:

STRIPE COLOUR SHIRT	TIE COLOUR
Blue-white	Blue, red or green
Pink-white	Blue or green
Green-white	Purple or orange (for dandies)

Things become more difficult if the tie has a pattern. The pattern should reflect the colour of the shirt, but not match the darker shade of the stripes.

An example: a pink-white shirt and a blue tie with white dots matching the width of the white stripes on the shirt. It is also possible to wear a striped shirt with a striped tie.

A popular combination in Italy: a blue-white striped shirt with blue tie and charcoal jacket

Summery and light: beige linen jacket with patch pockets and a white, Sea Island cotton shirt, coupled with rough-textured tie in navy blue

Sophisticated: light blue and white striped shirt, finely dotted tie under a brown-beige houndstooth jacket

Another summer combination: double-breasted linen jacket and checked linen shirt with knitted tie

Elegant masterpiece in rosegold by Gemellidapolso Christiano Barbulo

CUFFLINKS

Cufflink wearers like to produce a certain effect. Cufflinks are a common sight among lawyers, bankers, management consultants, tax advisors and upper management of big firms, and make a certain elitist impression. However, this can backfire when you turn up at the office fully suited and booted and realise that everyone else is wearing regular shirts. You should be aware of your social status, the place, and the kind of people you'll be dealing with before donning French cuffs and cufflinks.

The choice of cufflinks is endless. Cufflinks can indicate origin, hobbies, profession, or simply elegance, wealth, and power. In the UK, wearing original cufflinks is positively received; in other countries such as Germany, it can too easily be misconstrued as arrogant posturing. When you are in company where cufflinks might be eyed with suspicion, coloured cuff knots are a universally accepted, popular, and cheap alternative. They can provide a playful splash of colour on an otherwise monochrome outfit, or match the tie. It's absolutely fine to wear bright colours such as yellow or red in combination with a navy blue suit. Cuff knots are much lighter than metal cufflinks and are generally accepted in the business world.

Simple cufflinks made from silver or gold create instant elegance. Both metals have a different effect. Gold is often worn at festive occasions; silver is more common for everyday use. It is considered good taste to match the metal of the cufflinks to the watch for a harmonious overall look.

Metal buttons, stylish alternative to knot and sphere shape

Art déco from 1925, spotted at Hancocks in London

Mediterranean style: Precious pieces made from coral

Classic oval shape fitted with precious gems

For aficionados – hand painted enamel

Alternative fastening mechanism: The double "stirrup"

HAIR

"Sooner or later everyone needs a haircut."

"The man who wasn't there", Ethan Coen/Joel Coen, 2001

Barber shops have noticed that customers are becoming more demanding when it comes to their haircuts and hairstyles. The era of minimalistic, low-maintenance looks is far from over, but these looks have been joined by smooth, old-school gentleman styles.

The hairstyle is the domain of the hairdresser. Yet more than a few gents have a very ambivalent relationship with their hairdresser, despite the fact that each session can be quite enjoyable. Particularly if the barber shop sits right in the centre of London, in and around Piccadilly. When you spend time in a place like this, you are immediately aware of the vast difference in treatment between a gentleman barber and a run-of-the-mill, local hairdresser. A gentleman barber is equally skilled in handling a pair of scissors as he is in the art of conducting polite conversation – if the customer so desires. Should the subject be broached, the gentleman barber will direct you to the best quality bespoke shirt maker, or casually discuss the virtues of exotic cars. If the customer shows an interest in such stories, the barber might share the story of how he acquired his vintage Ferrari or restored his VW beetle. This sort of chat is in no way unusual.

Extolling the virtues of fine cars, elegant clothes and other men's toys, delivered with polite reserve and wit whilst receiving a perfect haircut and impeccable service, is what you can expect from a gentleman's barber shop. Naturally, female hairdressers cannot be expected to be equally versed, or even interested, in traditional men's subject matters. In this case, plenty of alternative subjects spring to mind, from discussing the weather, relationships, holidays, gastronomy to astrology. Regardless of whether you deal with a male or female hairdresser, what ultimately counts is the result of their work, a result which you have to feel comfortable with for the next few weeks. Albeit slightly exaggerated, the above account is intended to draw attention to an essential activity in a gentleman's styling and grooming routine: Getting a haircut is a serious matter. A slick haircut can significantly improve your self-confidence. Trusting dilettantes and demotivated amateurs with your hair can do serious damage to your style. Repeated disappointments can lead to a deep-seated scepticism toward the hairdressing profession in general. Prudent customers should therefore take the initiative and voice their displeasure immediately if the result and the service aren't up to scratch.

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G Ettinger Ltd., London, Great Britain: 121 t., 188 t., 189, 193, 195 l.b.
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Spencer ten Brink, Milton Keynes, Great Britain: 6, 17, 20, 23, 24 r.t., m.m., r.m., 25, 26, 35 l.b., 37, 38, 41, 46 m.b., 56 l., 62 – 65, 78, 80 r.t., 143, 163, 165, 167 r.b., 171 t., l.m., l.b., 180 r.m.
Sperry Top-Sider / Wolverine World Wide Inc., USA: 92 l.m., 93 l.t.
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Swims AS, Oslo, Norwegen: 85
The Nautical Company Ltd., Hampshire: 107 b., 110
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Trigema, Burladingen, Germany: 24 l.m., 130 r.t.
Truefitt & Hill Ltd., London, Great Britain: 148, 151, 152
Vacheron Constantin, Genf, Switzerland: 166 m., 167, r.m.
WP Lavori in Corso Srl, Milan, Italy: 99 r.b., 101 r.b.
Zimmerli Textil AG, Aarburg, Switzerland: 128, 130 l.m., l.b., 131 – 135, 138
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