

Men's Suit Ideas

I'm looking for some new suit ideas. My last suits came from Macy's or Men's Wearhouse. They are ok but I'm looking for something nicer. Where is a place to buy suits on the next level? Maybe a place for a custom tailored suit or off the rack?

Bonus question - what are some top quality men's dress shoes?

Thanks!

No idea where you are, so that makes it hard. My suits are all custom from Tom James. I love them. But, I loved my sales guy more. He left and started his own company. I haven't had a need for a new suit, but google Devan Rosdahl. Great guy, even better suits. But they may be out of your price range. If there is a Tom James rep near you, talk to them.

Jonathan G. Stein, California

I like Tom James - very affordable custom. Off the rack <http://davidecenci.com/> isn't bad either if you're not going for bespoke (I'm sure their custom tailoring is even nicer).

Richard Young, New York

What's your budget? That is going to determine a lot. Also, you should factor in tailoring. Some stores include basic alterations but very often you will need more than that and that will add to the cost.

Also, what is your style? Obviously as a lawyer you don't want to be too fashion forward, but there are subtle variations in the different makes of suits.

Robert Weiss

I missed the bonus question. For shoes, I like Ferragamo and Bally. I was going to test out custom Suarte shoes but their boutique near my office closed.

Richard Young

I like Canali suits. I just bought one at a ridiculous price. I can't keep my hands off of it. The fabric is fantastic. Very nice quality. Find a really good tailor though.

Craig McLaughlin, California

I agree with those who said Tom James. You can spend as little or as much as you like, and it is totally customizable. It's basically one step below true bespoke. I've also used Bill Owings, pretty much the same thing, and I actually like it a little more. You need to develop a relationship with your salesperson. They come and meet me at my office with a swatch book, they take my measurements, I give them my budget and what I'm thinking, and we figure it out from there. Last time, I told the guy I want a charcoal, 2-button, side vents, working cuffs, ticket pocket on the left hand side, and I want to spend \$XXX. We did the deal in probably 30 minutes. Tom James will also do packages that include ties and shirts.

For off the rack suits, I like Brooks Brothers. Since it is over 100 degrees with sweltering humidity here in Charleston, right now I'm wearing a linen Brooks Brothers suit (I don't think I'm old enough to pull off seersucker without looking like I'm playing dress up). I got it at a BB outlet store for around \$500 if I recall correctly, and tailored at my local tailor for \$45. Zegna and Canali are also nice for off the rack, but honestly if I'm spending that much, I'd rather just go the custom route with Tom James or Bill Owings.

As far as shoes, I prefer Allen Edmonds. I'm a big believer in spending more money up front for higher quality and longer lasting items. The AEs that I'm wearing right now were around \$250 on sale, but I've had them for 4 or 5 years and I've only had to re-sole them once. On that note, find a good local cobbler to develop a relationship with. Last time I took shoes to mine, I only need one sole repaired, but the guy did the other one for free. He completely re-soled both of them and gave them the type of shine only a professional can do. Cost \$40 I think. Totally worth it.

Ryan Phillips, South Carolina

SuitSupply makes some really nice suits. I don't think they are super-premium level like Boglioli and Canali but they are extremely well made for the price.

Evan Marx

It really depends on where you're located and your sizes. Average sized men can do very nicely off the rack at places like Brooks Brothers or other similar men's stores. Pay to have it custom fit. I'm not average sized and always get made to measure through traveling tailors that usually source through Hong Kong. About the same price as a Brooks Brother suit.

Allen Edmonds are by far the best men's shine value available. Somebody, but damn well worth it. 20 year old pair that they weren't happy with the refurb and they gifted me a brand new pair.

Roger Traversa, Pennsylvania

Oh, and the very best way to prolong the life and look of leather shoes is to use shoe trees. All my dress shoes have the same shape they did on the day I bought them - no misshapen uppers, etc. Cedar is preferred for shoe trees due to smell and moisture absorption, but any shoe tree will do.

Ryan Phillips

Ryan's right about shoe trees, but spend the time to learn to do your own polishing. No one outside of Allen Edmonds will do a proper shine. Depending on condition includes cleaning, balming, polishing, polishing, and polishing.

And it's a tiny little thing, but properly lace your shoes. Some are laced crosswise and others are laced straight across.

Roger Traversa

I'm due for new suits - I like Hart Schaffner & Mark, but they can be pricy.

I'm waiting on Empire Tailors to come to town to order some suits from them: <http://www.empiretailors.com/catalog/index.php>

This will be a test to see how good they are, but if they are nice and nicely priced they will have my measurements and I can just order another suit or two.

One recommendation I can make is more so than the suit is the tailor. I bought some suits from men's warehouse and they were tailors so badly that they were unwearable. Took them to my dry cleaner's tailor and he fixed them up right.

Bruce Wingate, New York

One option that I have used, once I researched it, was to order suits from Land's End. I found out they are made in the same factory as the Brooks Brothers suits. One advantage is that you can order them as "separates" (order the pants by size and the jacket by size) separately. I wear a standard waist/inseam, so the pants do not need any alterations. The jackets only need minimal alterations. I always order two pair of pants with the suit as well that extends the "life" of the suit (the pants always seem to get more wear than the jackets).

One caveat, I have not ordered from them since Sears bought Land's End so I do not know if Sears screwed them up . . . FWIW.

Walter D. James III, Texas

For the last twenty years or so I have gotten my suits from Aarons International. It is a Hong Kong tailor that has a representative travel throughout the US to measure you and let you select the fabric. The suits are not inexpensive but are well priced for the quality. They also last long and fit well. I have even gotten complements from other attorneys on my suits. You can get the contact information at:

http://www.aaronsintl.com/how_to.html

Their are lots of top quality dress shoes, but the most important factor is how comfortably they fit and your personal taste. There is no correlation between price

and comfort when it comes to shoes. I personally like Santoni. I also have a pair of Bruno Magli ankle boots that are comfortable but have owned another pair Bruno Magli loafers that were really painful. Among the better brands are Prada, Ferragamo, Gucci, and Allen Edmonds.

Bert Krages, Oregon

Canali suits are very good. Available at Nordstrom among other high end places.

Allen-Edmund Shoes cannot be beat.

Robert "Robby" W. Hughes, Jr., Georgia

I'm fat. As a result, it's hard for me to find things off the rack that look good and fit well.

I've had incredible luck with Indochino's suits (<https://www.indochino.com>). They don't balk or have special pricing for people my size, are perfectly happy to cover the cost of any final alterations (or remake if it can't be altered) and the materials look good and are long-lasting. I just wish there was an easy way to add an extra pair of trousers to my suit orders.

I strongly recommend monitoring their Facebook and twitter feeds, or signing up for their newsletter. They are constantly running sales. For example, they're running a \$399 sale on a blue and a grey suit right now.

I have had far less luck with their dress shirts. They seem to frequently have a 5 for \$300 sale going, but I'm now on my third remake of my first shirt order - the arm holes just never seem to land where I want them. I ended up visiting their NYC showroom this past weekend to let them measure me again and they're sending a new remake shirt to see if that solves it.

Mark Lyon

I went to Boston to visit my mother and happened to catch the Jos. A. Banks Four for One Sale, which is, I think, an annual or semiannual.

Frankly, I can't afford four \$1000.00 suits. But I could afford four \$250.00 suits that used to be \$1000.00 suits.

I worked at a fairly upscale haberdasher when I was in high school, so I do know what to look for in a suit, and while you can't beat custom tailoring. The quality of the Banks suits is quite good.

Good luck.

Just remember, in the end, it's not the suit but the contents of the lawyer in the suit that counts.

Peace

Jim Moriarty, Iowa

Make sure you check out a couple of these options. I used to get suits at Nordstrom. But in my size, they had limited selection and they NEVER were on sale. Jos A Bank is great for my almost 6' brother in law, but at 5'5, they don't have suits in my size.

Jonathan G. Stein, California

I'm glad someone recommended a made-to-measure online label. I've used www.oliverwicks.com for my suits for a few years. I really liked them at the start, but they made some changes in their production or patterns, and the last two suits I got just aren't as great. Good material, but I never could get them to fit perfectly.

I'm tall and skinny, so I'd always have to spend \$200-300 getting a Men's Wearhouse suit tailored. I love made-to-measure since I get the right fit for a good price.

I may have to give Indochino a try for my next suit.

Andrew Flusche, Virginia

Seconding (or more like thirding or fourthing) the Indochino recommendation. There is also another Made-To-Measure company called 7 Regent Lane that I have used and been very pleased with.

I don't think I would pay full price for their suits, but fortunately they both have sales semi-frequently (seasonally, and also around the big sale days like Memorial Day and Labor Day) where you can sometimes snag one of their basic suits for \$300-\$400 if you get lucky.

Made-To-Measure (or full-fledged bespoke if you can afford it) is the way to go; I still wear off-the-rack suits a lot because I am an impoverished new attorney (the Indochino and 7 Regent Lane suits are reserved for court appearances or meeting clients whom I think would actually notice if I lacked pick stitching on my lapels), and I think a \$120 off-the-rack from JCPenney is pretty much as good as one from Express or Banana Republic after you dump about \$20-\$40 worth of tailoring into it.

No way would I ever pay more than \$300-\$400 for an off-the-rack suit when I can get Made-To-Measure for the same price, no matter the brand.

Shoe Bonus: While perhaps not strictly a fancy, next-level shoe, Sebagos <http://www.sebago.com/US/en/mens-dress-shoes/> look pretty good imo and are mad comfortable for day-to-day wear.

Bryce Davis, Florida

I should have included it in my initial post, but if you ever find yourself in Delhi, I highly recommend visiting Sachin Vaish in Connaught Place. (<http://www.vaish.com/>)

The prices are not bargain-basement cheap (between \$300 - 1000 depending on fabric choices), but the suits and the material are truly wonderful. Plus, the entire experience is a real adventure - from entering the tiny store filled with mountains of fabrics to the process of discussing your needs and the measurement/fitting. The entire experience is memorable and, at the end, you wind up with that perfect suit for special occasions.

Mark Lyon

I second the Brooks Brothers suggestion for suits and dress shirts/ties. Go one suit at a time (black, navy blue, mix of winter weight suits and spring/summer suits, etc.) and bear in mind that suit colors and weights can vary depending on practice area and geographic location of your practice. I would suggest Johnston & Murphy for dress shoes (I believe they have made shoes for many Presidents since Abraham Lincoln). I have worn Brooks Brothers suits/shirts/ties and J&M shoes for over 35 years in the practice of law and have gotten numerous compliments over the years. I would also suggest getting cuffs on dress pants. In the end, go with your instincts (it is a good idea to bring your wife/girlfriend/significant other with you shopping to provide another perspective when trying on clothing/shoes). Always remember that "good taste never goes out of style". Good luck and best wishes to you for your career and for your shopping.

Bob Beatson, Maryland

As a solo patent attorney my favorite summer attire is: a polo shirt, nice shorts with a belt, and Keen sandals.

Michael Blake, Connecticut

So that was you I saw at Superior Court! How've you been Michael?

John Leonard, Connecticut

For suits (and jackets and slacks), you can't go wrong with Brooks Brothers; their best deals are in their outlet stores. I like Clarks shoes (they also have outlet stores). Although you did not ask, Costco's Kirkland Signature house brand makes excellent dress shirts and dress slacks; they are unbeatable values.

Steven Finell, California

And in contrast, I will never, ever, ever walk into a Brooks Brothers store again. I have been in two and both times, I was ignored like I couldn't afford a pair of socks. I find their service awful.

Hence, check out a few places.

Jonathan G. Stein

I agree on Brooks Brothers and Clarks Shoes. Watch Brooks Brothers sales and you can do very well on their suits, especially the two-fer deals. My wife gets me an occasional gift certificate and that turns it into a very good deal. Also I've purchased suits at BB outlets and had them altered at nominal cost at regular store. Tip the tailor - I learned the hard way.

I like Brooks Brothers for suits and ties but don't like the fit or collar roll of their shirts. For shirts I've started purchasing online from Charles Tyrwhitt (excellent customer service) and sometimes Paul Frederick.

John Leonard

Word on the street is that Kirkland shirts at Costco are made from the same factory as BB.

Paul Gieri

I'll second Tyrwhitt for economical shirts and great service. They always have some kind of sale going on, but if you wait a bit, you'll find some that are better than others. At the price too, I don't feel bad when they wear out, etc.

Lyman Terni – Notta lawyer

To just build a wardrobe quickly while you make enough money to get a good made to order suit, Jos A Bank is ALWAYS having a 2 for 1 or three for one sale but the

original prices are somewhat inflated. Jos Banks suits look good when you buy them but I don't think they are in it for the long haul.

Mens Warehouse recently bought Jos Bank so we will see what happens.

John Miles, Georgia

I like to think that I care as much about appearance and grooming as any lawyer does, for both my papers and myself. However, I do not agree that every man should aspire to a wardrobe of "bespoke" clothing.

I have never indulged in that luxury. I am fortunate that quality off-the-rack clothing fits almost perfectly, and I always have a local tailor apply finishing touches. In addition to perfecting the fit, I like extra lining in the saddle of slacks, which prolongs their life by several years, and I am very fussy about cuffs and sleeve length.

In the early 1970s, as a second-year associate in a Biglaw firm, I invested in a very good quality dinner suit (a so-called tuxedo) because I was attending roughly 2 events per year where one was appropriate. Innumerable alterations later, I still wear that suit, and it does not look either dated or worn. Good quality suits have at least 3 times the useful life of poorly made clothing, which more than recoups the price differential between quality and Men's Warehouse.

Many young male lawyers I see never learned how to buy a suit, have it properly fitted, or coordinate it with shirts and accessories, and never learned how to choose, tie, or wear neckties. I blame this on Internet porn. When I was in high school and college, my generation had Playboy as a constant source of good information on these topics, every month, as soon as we finished drooling over the pictures. Internet porn has all but eliminated the main reason for reading Playboy, and therefore deprived male youth of important education. (Playboy also had excellent interviews.)

I've actually thought about writing an article on "Something Else You Never Learned in Law School: Clothing and Grooming for the Young Male Lawyer." I hesitate for fear of looking like a jackass.

Do tailors still ask which side you "dress" on?

Steven Finell