

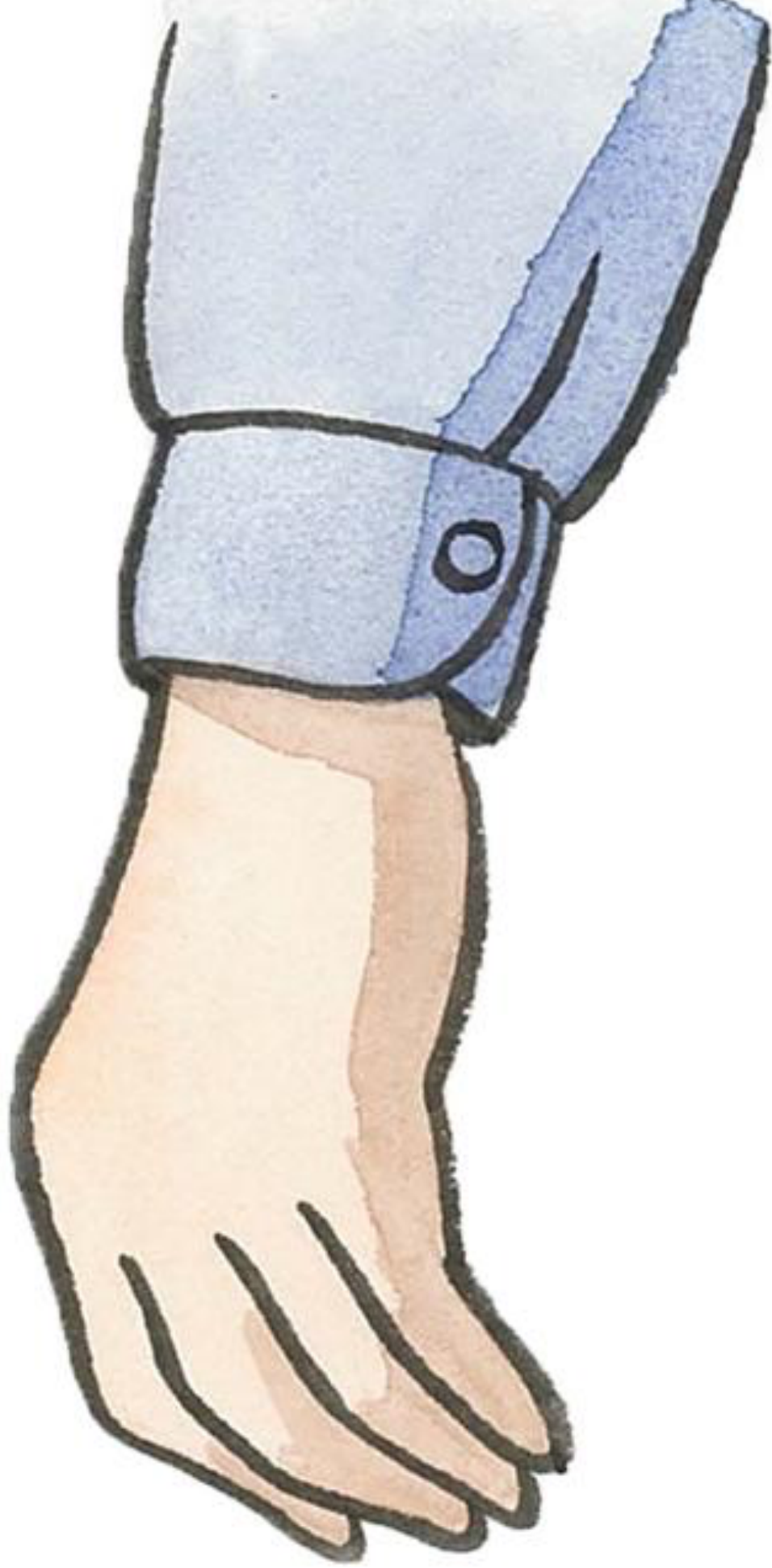


PILLARS OF STYLE: FIT

# P R E F A C E

More so than any other variable, it is the fit of a suit that dictates whether that suit fails or succeeds as a garment. It is also fit that often differentiates a sartorially-minded man from his less knowledgeable peers. One need only take an ill-fitting suit to a skilled tailor and mark the difference between the 'before' and 'after' to realize how an inch or two here or there drastically affects the overall appearance of a suit. Even those who are not conversant in the language of tailoring can look at a man in a well-fitting suit and realize that he has done something 'right,' even if what is 'right' about it is not readily apparent to the untrained eye.

As with most things in the world of fashion, fit can be a very subjective issue rife with differing opinions and rules. We have our own tried and true guidelines for fit. Even if you should disagree with us on some points, we hope that this guide rings true for you on most accounts and provides you with some valuable sartorial knowledge on the three basic elements of any gentlemanly outfit: the dress shirt, the trousers, and the suit jacket.

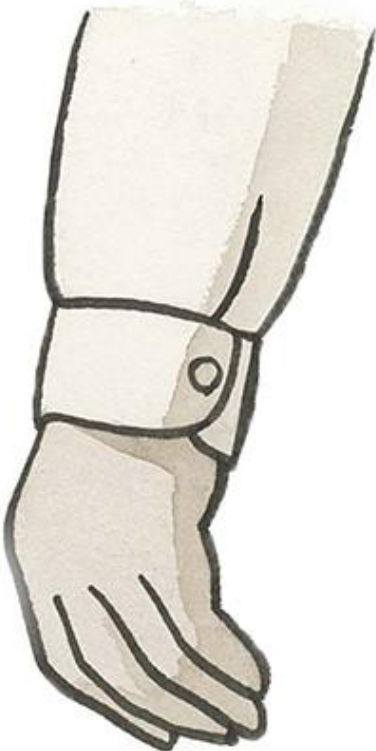
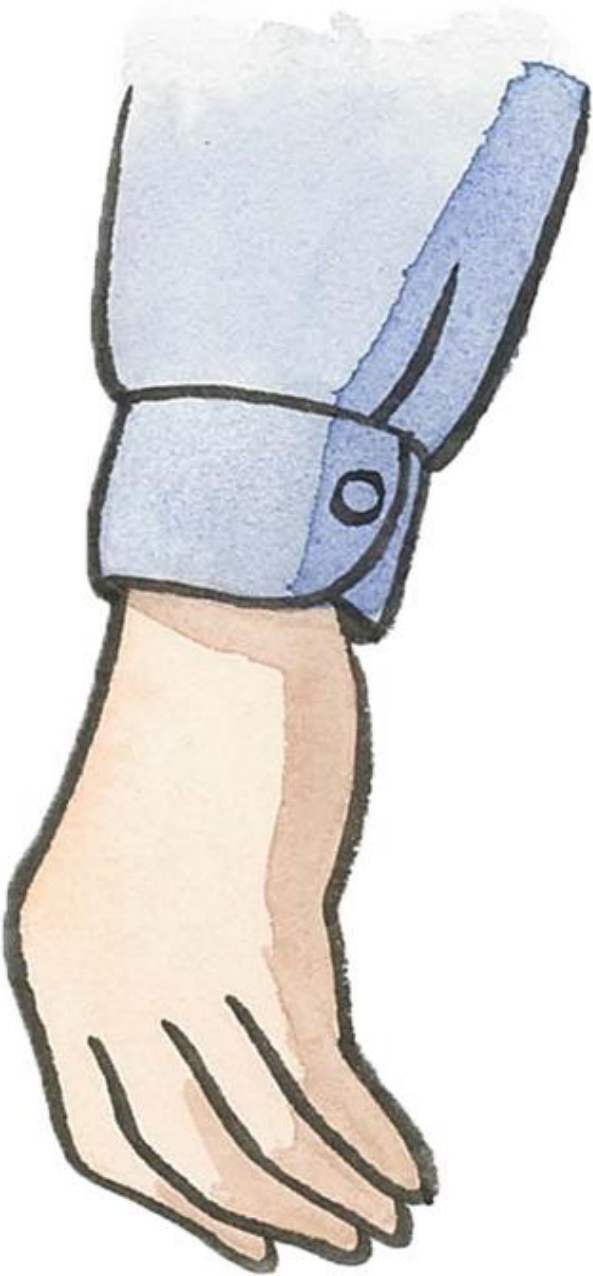
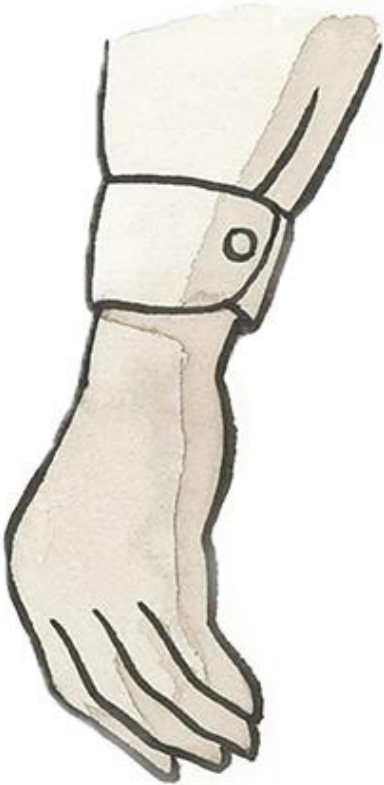


S H I R T

A well-fitting dress shirt is an essential item for all men who aim to look their best. The fit of a dress shirt is diplomatic. It follows the same principles across all men and their corresponding body types.

Whereas a tailored suit ought to be constructed to highlight the body's physical assets and hide any undesirable flaws, the dress shirt follows no such principle. Whether one has a large gut or a small, a legitimate gun show or a mere pocket pistol, the male dress shirt does not prefer any stereotype in its cut. Instead, its construction uses the individual body as its guide.

The best way to start thinking of how a shirt should fit is to first understand the menswear term 'allowance.' Allowance is the difference between the measurement of the garment, in this case the shirt, and the measurement of the body.



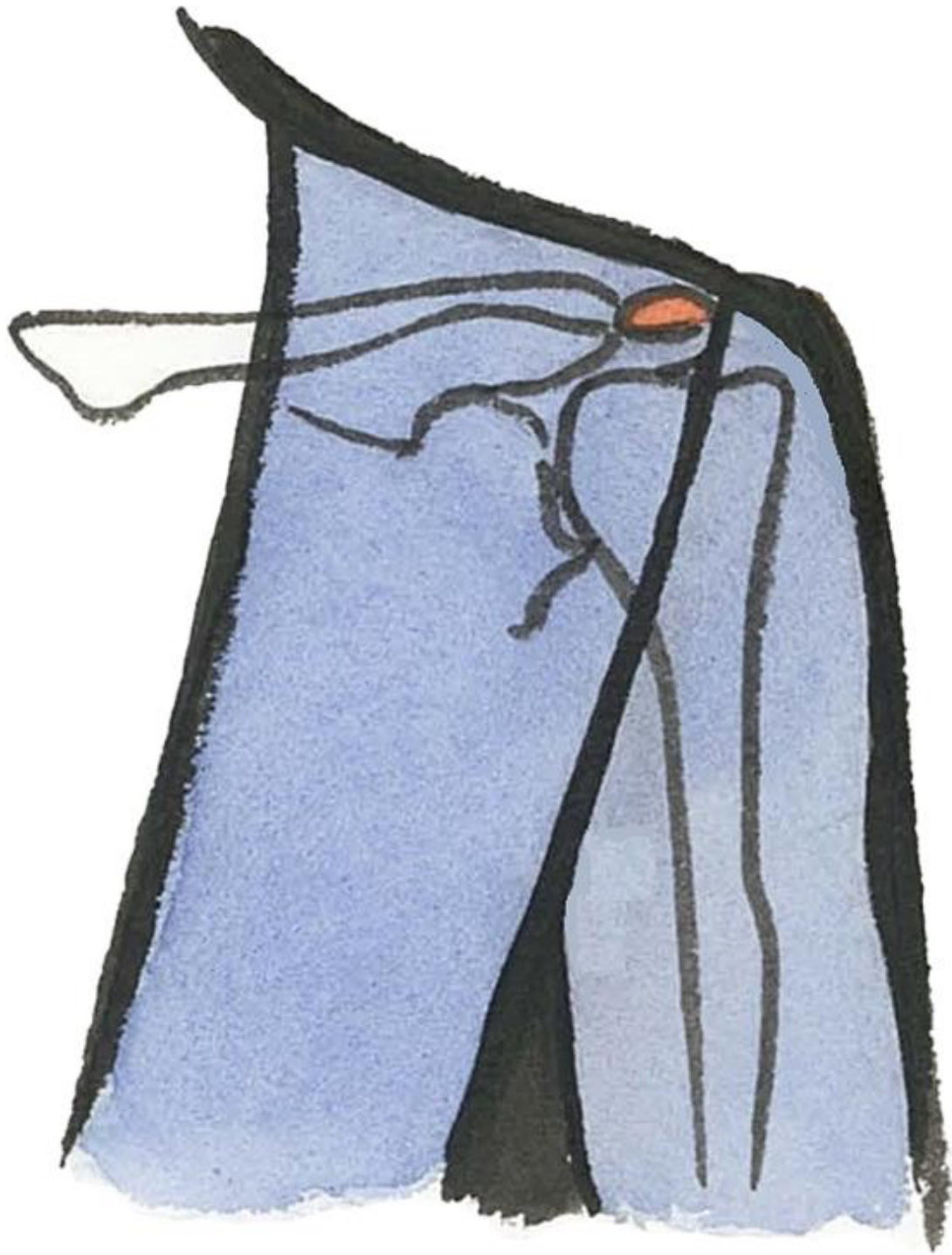
For a well-fitting shirt, the figure that represents allowance will always be quite small, a matter of an inch-and-a-half or so. For example, the flexed bicep should measure slightly smaller in circumference than the upper part of the shirt sleeve which provides coverage of that area; in this way, the shirt accommodates for the flexed muscle without straining the seams. The general inch-and-a-half allowance applies to the forearm, as well as to the belly, and so on. In general, the shirt should skim over the body without any pooling or bunching.

Two critical areas of importance in terms of dress shirt allowance are the collar and the cuffs. Visually, the collar should not present any portion of the neck above the top button. It should not be choking the wearer, either. There is a delicate balance here, usually about an average man's finger width being the indicator of proper allowance.

The average man's wrist is roughly seven inches in circumference, and there should exist very little allowance where the cuff is overlapped and buttoned. This is so that the shirt's cuff does not creep past the hinge of the wrist, or fall past the base of the thumb and base of the hand below the pinky.

This above preference differs from some tailor's 'house cut', which is the tailor's individual preference for how a shirt cuff should fit. The alternative fit here, in the opinion of some tailors, is that the shirt's cuff should fall just past the hinge of the wrist and poke out past the blazer's sleeve. The blazer's sleeve, in turn, terminates at the hinge of the wrist. Neither of these preferences exist as part of our philosophy.

A smaller than average wrist often results in the shirt cuff falling past the hinge of the wrist. In many cases, the simple remedy is to get a tailor, or seamstress, to adjust the placement of the cuff button so that the cuff overlaps more. This creates a smaller wrist allowance and remedies the problem. If your shirt was made-to-measure or bespoke, your smaller wrist should be accounted for and you should not have this problem with the cuff.

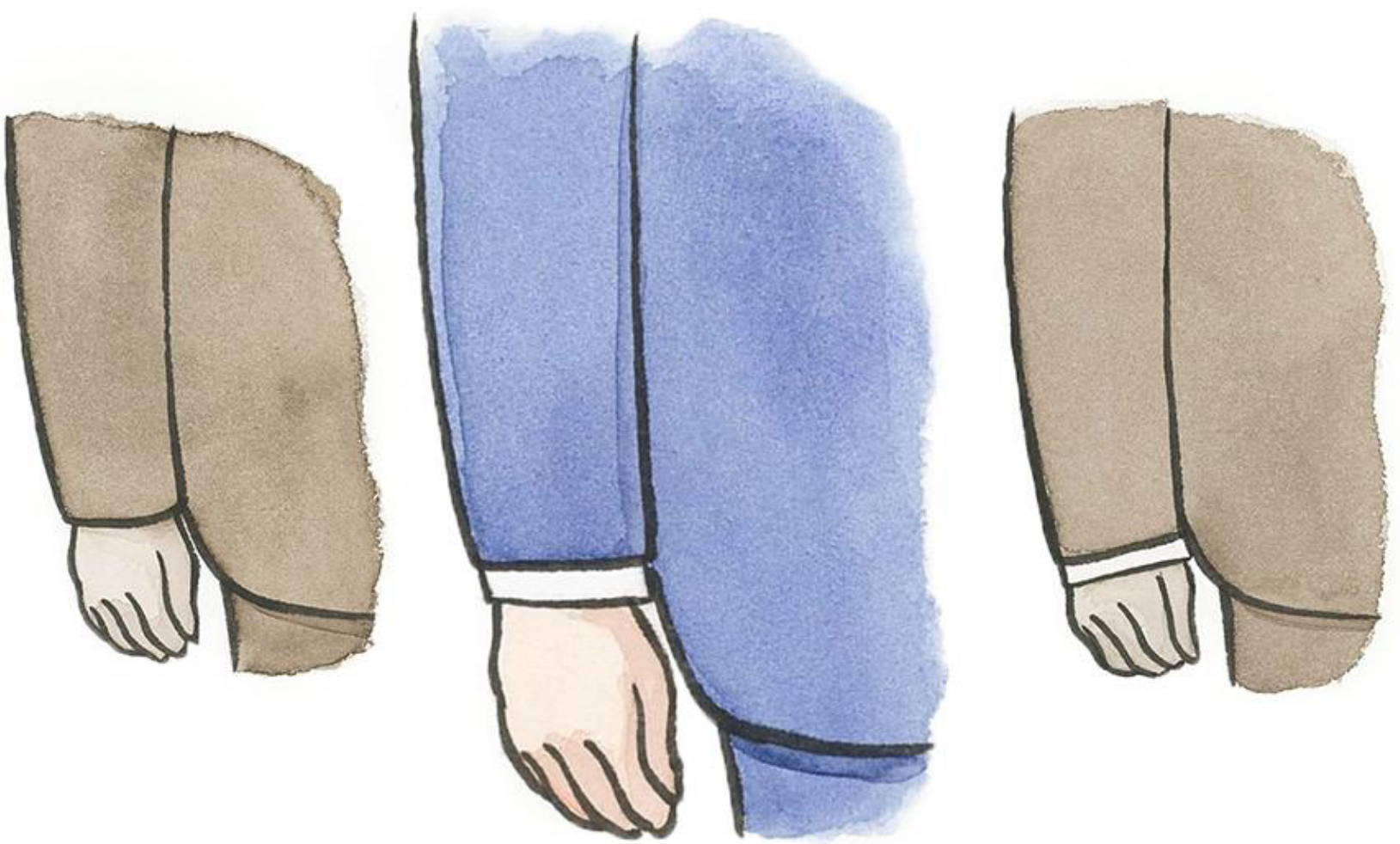




Another consideration for shirt fit is shoulder width. The seam from the neck outwards to the shoulder should end at the outside of the acromion, or the edge of the shoulder bone (see the shoulder anatomy diagram).

As mentioned, the cuff shouldn't pass the hinge of the wrist when buttoned, but when unbuttoned the sleeve should touch the hand. In fact, an unbuttoned sleeve should fall about half of the way down the base of the thumb. This way the sleeve doesn't migrate up the forearm too far when the arm is raised; instead the excess fabric will 'take up the slack.'

The body length should be long enough to be secured in place around the seat (buttocks) when tucked (i.e. always). This means there should be enough circumference in this 'below the belt' area to accommodate even when the hips and seat are large. The body length should extend approximately to the widest portion of the seat.





T R O U S E R S

Trousers are quite literally one half of the equation when getting dressed. Not to be trivialized, it is important to instead respect that the way trousers fit plays a big role in the overall appearance of a man and thus the image he presents of himself to the world.

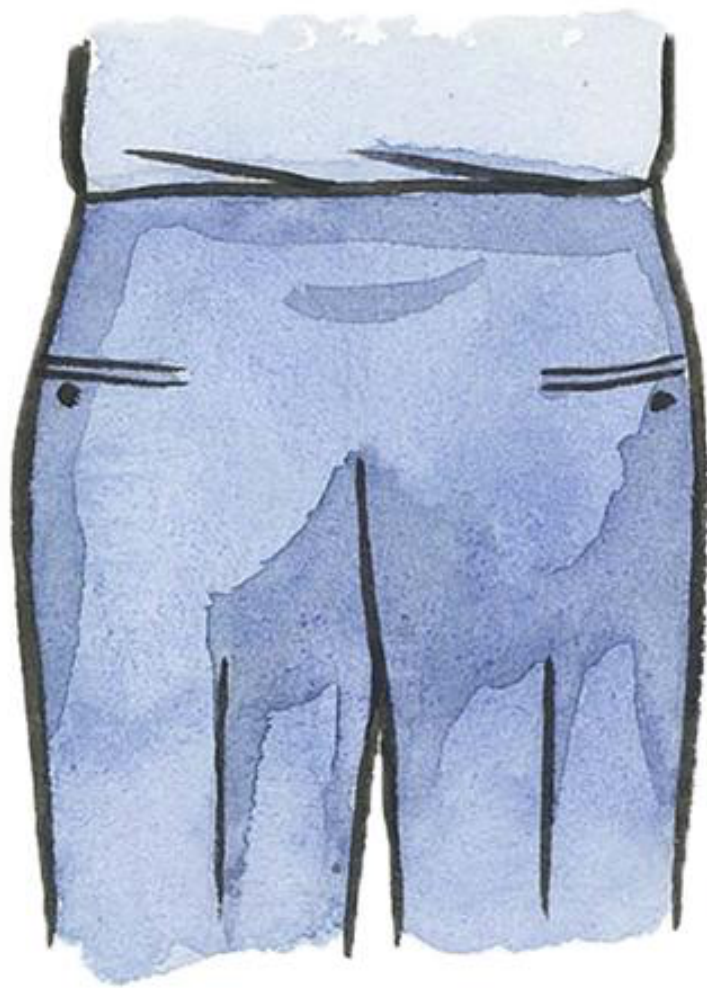
Let's consider a pair of trousers from top to bottom.

Starting at the waistband, we prefer a clean look, free of belt loops, as we believe the loops to be a symptom of a belt system that is based on bad engineering. If the trousers are appropriately tailored, a belt is functionally unnecessary. Additionally, a belt can often aesthetically detract from a suit's overall appearance, bringing attention away from the body's attractive vertical lines.

The waistband should be constructed with the correct circumference in relation to the wearer's waist so as to sit unmoving at waist height when worn. This is good engineering. For general reference, the waist is usually 1" below the belly button of most men.

There are instances where the circumference of the wearer's waist or that of the trousers' waistband may temporarily change, such as temporary weight loss, or as a result of gradually stretching out the waistband's fabric. For these instances, we think it necessary to add side adjuster tabs to the waistband, with buttons that can be reached and closed by folding back a side portion of the waistband fabric in on itself. This will instantly decrease the waistband's circumference for continued proper fit.

Moving down, next is the seat, which is the area below the waistband that covers the buttocks. On the front of the trousers is the crotch, which is the area below the waistband that covers the pelvis. The trousers should not 'hug' the seat too much, nor should there be excess fabric pooling around the seat area, a condition often unflatteringly referred to as 'dirty diaper'. One must strike a delicate balance with a bit, but not too much, drape. In the crotch area, the inseam should come up as high as possible without discomfort or close hugging of the man's crotch.



The next area of importance is the thigh, or upper leg, which can range in size greatly depending on the man. As with the fit of the dress shirt, allowance is key here. Individuals with slender legs will have, relatively speaking, a smaller allowance than their larger-thighed counterparts. However, no matter the size of the man, the allowance must be large enough that the fabric covering the thighs does not appear "painted on" and cannot be pinched away from the skin. The allowance should be such that no individual thigh muscles are noticeable. Only a smooth falling leg drape is appropriate, from the thighs downward.

Just as the thighs need more relative cloth circumference, it is obvious that the ankles are always much smaller compared to the thighs, and their allowance should be planned accordingly. In other words, the trouser should taper down the leg in some degree to make a narrow opening at the bottom. An ankle circumference of between fourteen inches and sixteen inches will look best, on the spectrum from smaller body types to larger body types, respectively. This is partly a matter of preference, and trial and error at the tailor, to determine what's best for each individual.

Lastly, there is the hem of the trousers, which refers to the very bottom of each leg. The inseam, which measures from the crux of the inner thigh/pelvis downward, should terminate at the ankle bone. Specifically, the inseam should measure down to the bottom of the bulbous ankle bone. For practical purposes, add one half-inch of length to the inseam for the actual trouser measurement. This will result in a mature 'slight break' with minimal excess fabric over top of the shoe. If the inseam is too long, the trouser leg will 'break' too much and unsightly bunching and folding will occur around the ankles.

When an individual is standing, this added half-inch should cover the sock, including above the sides of the shoe where there tends to be a U-shaped dip below the ankle bone. To create a more streamlined look, such as for a more formal pair of trousers, have the tailor angle the hem a half-inch so that it reaches the bottom of the ankle bone at the front of the hem, and reaches a half-inch below the ankle bone at the back of the hem. This will minimize the break over the top of the shoe.







J A C K E T

A sport coat, blazer, or suit jacket represents a giant leap towards maturity when it comes to dressing well as a man. A properly tailored jacket contributes to a man's pragmatism and ensures that his person is usefully organized, as well as stylish, at all times.

Blazers and suit jackets have been worn by men for the greater part of the past century, and thus wearing one today is a nod towards tradition. Attention should be paid to having multiple blazers that differ in cloth and weight depending on the season and weather they are to be worn in.

In addition to being historic, blazers are also utilitarian in design, and notably pragmatic. Just as a woman has a purse to carry her essentials, a man has a blazer to keep his, often comparably fewer, essential items. A wallet, cell phone, sunglasses, and keys are fair game to be kept in a blazer's pockets. To avoid an 'overstuffed' look, the man should keep these items distributed evenly among all the blazer's pockets, both interior and exterior. This ensures that the overall fit of the jacket won't be affected by pocket 'bulges' happening anywhere. Moreover, one will be more thoroughly organized, as each essential item will have its assigned pocket.

Now, on to the fit of the blazer itself. The general point is that the jacket should drape smoothly. Because men come in all shapes and sizes, there exists no singular answer for how a blazer should fit, just guidelines to follow. These guidelines will ensure that a man is looking his best and is in harmony with the construction of the jacket, so as to not add undue wear to its stress points.

The blazer's collar should hug the back of the wearer's shirt collar the same way you may picture a star athlete holding a towel tight around the back of his neck in a post-game interview. The aim is to expose the top half of the shirt collar all the way around, so that it 'peeks' out above the jacket collar. This has to do more with the relative heights of the shirt collar and jacket collar, but should be planned for accordingly in a man's purchases.

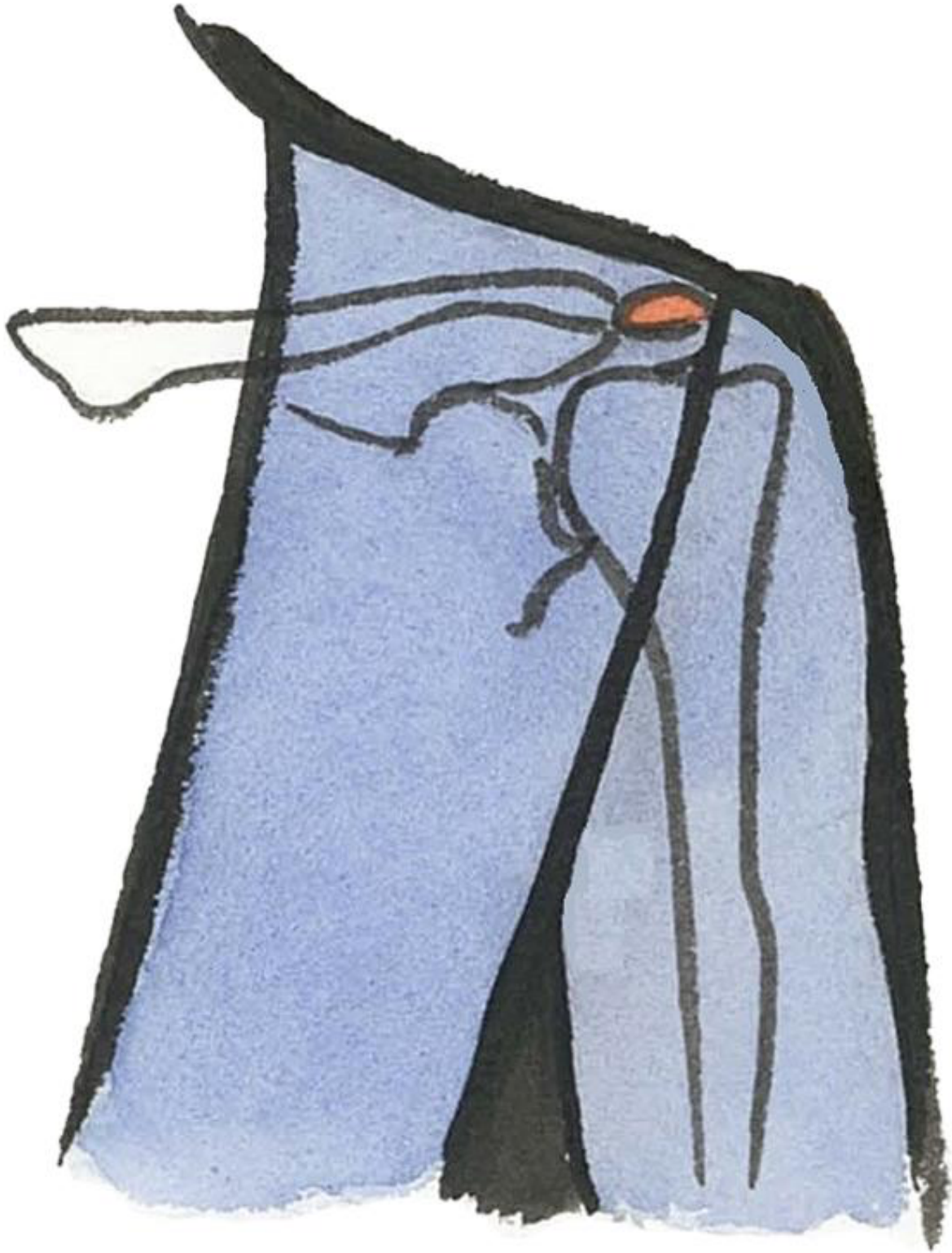
The blazer collar should not bend or gap in a way that exposes the bottom half of the shirt collar, or, worse yet, the body of the shirt itself. This is a classic sign of an inferior fit.



Whereas a shirt diplomatically follows the contours and architecture of the body, a jacket only partially does this. There are certain body landmarks which determine the structure of a jacket, but there are also ways to accentuate the body's assets and hide its flaws.

At the shoulders, the acromion bone, or shoulder bone, is the landmark for the shoulder seam of the jacket. The seam should be right at the outside edge of this shoulder bone, with the actual sleeve extending about a half-inch out to cover the deltoid muscles of the shoulder.

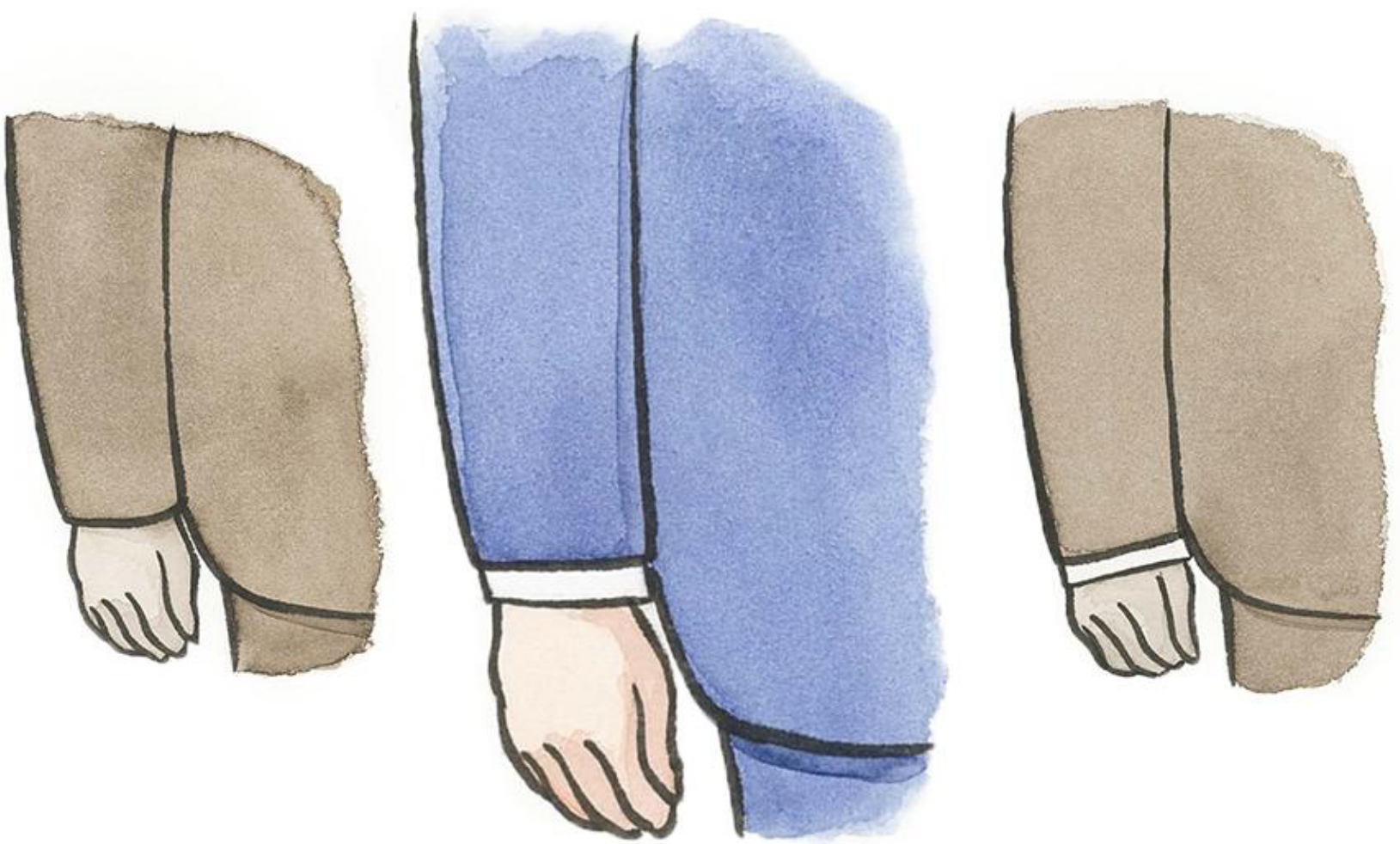
From the shoulder, the sleeve should taper smoothly down to one half-inch short of the base of the thumb and base of the pinky finger. This is so that some shirt cuff will 'poke' out beyond the jacket sleeve. This is a particular point that differs depending on the tailor's 'house cut.' Sometimes the tailor will advise and cut the suit jacket so that the sleeve will continue all the way to the hinge of the wrist, or just past it. We advise against this, as a gentleman should not prefer to wear his shirt or jacket sleeves past the base of the thumb and pinky, which is what's required to show some cuff if one chooses the aforementioned 'house cut'.



Another matter of length is the body of the jacket, referred to by tailors as the 'skirt.' It should be covering the buttocks, or seat, of the wearer completely, and should stop at the point where complete coverage is achieved and no more. The front and back should hang to the same point, which may mean, depending on the size of the trouser seat, that the back will have to be cut slightly longer than the front. Usually the front of the skirt will end at the crotch, but this length is determined by the placement of the bottom of the wearer's seat, not any particular landmark at the front.

The inner line of the lapels is called the 'gorge' and runs all the way to the top functioning button on the front of the jacket. This line should ideally extend to somewhere near the line of the belly button, but generally not below it.







C O N C L U S I O N

By following these general guidelines on fit, you will have a solid foundation for any outfit. The fit of a man's suit is, essentially, the brick and mortar of his outfit. Though silk ties and hand-rolled pocket squares are desirable details, they, much like a beautiful stone relief on a building, cannot stand on their own if the underlying architecture is faulty. When it comes to a man's clothing, each part must contribute to the whole, creating a harmonious look.