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IT'S IN THE DETAILS

How to inspect a suit before you buy. By Jillian Sprague

“Quality in a suit has a lot to do with the parts that don’t show,” says John Spillyards, a clothing expert who’s been helping well-dressed men find stellar suits for more than 20 years. Before you invest in a new suit, take a closer look to guarantee your garment is a worthy one.

Fabric. A well-made suit feels good to the touch and will be opaque when held up to the light. Tightly woven fibers give a garment strength and resilience, whereas a lesser suit may appear gauze-like, a sign that it will fall apart sooner. Crumple the sleeve and then release it—a quality fabric won’t easily hold wrinkles.

Stitching. The best suits are stitched by hand and worth the slightly higher price tag. Skilled tailors spend upwards of 20 hours putting in over 3,000 hand stitches, molding every aspect of the garment into perfect shape to allow for movement and contouring to the

body. Hand stitching also strengthens seams considerably more than machine stitching.

Buttonholes. A buttonhole made by machine is rigid and strains when you push the button through. When hand-sewn, it’s soft and flexible, molding around the button instead of tugging at it. Working buttons on suit jacket sleeves are a plus, allowing your cuff more room to move when you’re on the go.

Lining. Fine suits are lined with bemberg or silk instead of polyester. There’s a common misconception that half-lined suits are low-quality, but it’s just the opposite: a full lining can hide shoddy tailoring, while the exposure of a half lining ensures that seams are nicely finished.

Canvassing. Interior layers of canvas give a suit jacket its shape; the more used, the more constructed your jacket. Better suits have a basted canvas chest piece stitched into

place; in a cheap suit the canvas is basically hot glued in, resulting in ripples after only a few cleanings.

Fit. There’s a return to sartorial tailoring, so if you’re used to the baggier cuts of years past, it might take time to adjust to the new trimmer fit. But since the seams in high-quality suits are put in by hand, your garment will quickly mold to your body. The more you wear it, the more comfortable it will become.

Service. When you’re considering a major purchase, a good sales associate will take time to explain these aspects of a suit’s construction and help you find the exact fit and style you’re looking for.

If you choose to invest in a fine suit, you’ll wear it for years to come and feel like a million bucks each time you do. “High-end suiting is the most legitimate value in the clothing business,” concludes Spillyards.