

STYLE + TECH FOR MEN



The Ultimate Guide to Looking Cool in Khaki

BY BRIAN O'CONNOR

Nothing says “Spring has arrived and summer is suspiciously lurking around the corner” more effectively than khaki. (Khaki is quite the eloquent fabric!) It also says you’re ready for the golf course or the yacht race, or that you’ve just joined the military, or that you’re headed for work at the garage, or ... you get the picture. Let’s face it: Khaki is like a five-tool player.

The World’s Most Adaptable Fabric “We’re tribal, we’re a herd and we’re constantly looking for clues that assure us we belong,” says Jamie O’Boyle, senior analyst at the Center for Cultural Studies. “If you wear khakis with a T-shirt or a blazer, people won’t know if you’re rich or poor. You belong anywhere. They say everybody looks rich in a bathing suit -- the same goes for khakis.”

Indeed, khaki enables both a 1950s classic look: a button-down shirt, khaki pants, Oxford shoes and a leather belt. You can also achieve an updated modern presentation: a slim-fit pant, a linen shirt, a canvas belt and canvas sneakers. A pair of pants has never been so versatile!

“And that’s the beauty of khaki,” says personal style concierge Amy Acton. “Every brand, every label does some variation of the fabric -- from \$79 to \$790, in an increasing variety of colors -- that enables that flexible day-to-night look. “From Retro to Modern.” You can update your khaki look by “showing a little ankle, with the hem a little shorter,” says Acton. “That’s the hipster look: slim-fit khaki, ankle showing, with a madras jacket, and a shrunken-fit color polo. Or, try a little twist on the preppie look with a nice-fitting white button-shirt that’s on the shorter side. Try wearing it untucked with a black skinny tie.”

This season, Gap (Twill Fit Slim Khakis , \$60), Dockers (D1 Slim Fit , \$30 to \$200), Ralph Lauren (Preston Flat-front Chino , \$75) and John Varvatos (Low-rise Slim Straight Leg Chino, \$145) are all offering slim-fit khakis.

Retreat From Pleats Many lines have discarded the pleat. “Double- and triple-pleat pants are dead,” says Acton. “I’m sure they will resurface, as everything does in men’s fashion. But for now, it’s about flat-front, classic Steve McQueen-style khakis -- although not everybody can wear a flat-front pant. Some guys are shaped like a pear, and a pear-shaped man with flat-front khakis can be a little scary.”

To prune this pear problem, there’s always the reverse pleat (when the pleat opens toward the pocket), which, according to Acton, is the go-to look. “It’s for the guy who feels the pleat is too old and outdated, so it has that younger feel. You can wear it with a leather hacking jacket, a soft-leather blazer, or with a safari jacket and a denim shirt underneath for the rugged look.” Khaki jackets, like this baby from Stafford , allows you to maximize the flexibility of the material.

“Fit is key,” says Acton. “Because it’s cotton twill, it’s usually heavier, so the drape is not nearly as nice -- which is part of the charm. So just remember it will not lay as smoothly or properly as your wool jacket, and it will wrinkle -- which is a look you need to be comfortable with ... and in.”

Suited for a non-black-tie wedding, business meeting or a night out on the town, the khaki *blazer* can make the invite list at an array of events, from sophisticated to casual. “It’s a great look,” says Acton, who recommends a khaki suit with a white shirt and black tie, black belt, and black shoes for the right business environment. “It’s clean, fresh and comfortable, but you still have that air of authority.”

So fall in line, men. Khaki is back in charge!

Photo: Getty Images

<http://www.styleandtechformen.com/blog/khakis/index.html#.Tqhpvxz06Vg>