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Men' s jackets style guide

Shopping for clothes between seasons is hard to master, because when all four seasons can legitimately happen in one day, you're almost sure you get some unwanted time. Don't make the schoolboy's mistake of neatly splitting your wardrobe by season because predictions are pretty much guaranteed to go off the track. The good news: every season is jacket season. Jackets are the middleweight prizes of your wardrobe. Not only will you get more wear from them than the thicker or thinner layers, but they also encourage you to better mix and match items I previously labeled as seasonal. We tracked down 10 versatile jacket styles for which customers barely have to justify buying. You're going to wear them all year round. The Varsity jacket Loved by preps, athletes and – more recently – men's donswear, the varsity jacket is a versatile and youthful style that follows between smart-casual and high sportswear. You don't have to be an introduced by Leaguer with a protruding trust fund to give your ride to this classic preppy, though. There are plenty of options that will give you extra style credits, without the need to set foot on campus, which will add a healthy dose of collegiate freshness to your weekend wardrobe. Key style The varsity jacket works best when the core shape becomes adult, says menswear designer Paul Higgins, whose CV name controls the likes of Hardy Amies, Diesel and Kilgour. A simple, clean version of the varsity jacket without much hassle going on will keep you wearing this vintage-inspired style for years to come, he says. How to look more high-end than high school? Look for premium fabrics like suede, pebble leather, and boiled wool that give the style a sophisticated reboot. Or, if you're working with a student's budget, look for darker colors like black, navy blue, and gray that invariably look more pricier than their colorful counterparts in a similar price range. Bomber Jacket Along with varsity jackets, bomber jackets have been one of the most sought after outerwear in the last two years, precisely because they are so in tune with the current concern of menswear for all things relaxed. Whether you recruit the design to complete a streetwear look or use one to dress an Oxford shirt, tailored trousers and loafers, with a bomber jacket at your command you can target almost any dress code. Key Style bomber jackets are everywhere, so to stand out, look at interesting fabrics says Alex Field, head of men's design at Reiss. It's hard to remember a season when the bomber wasn't a key player in menswear. It's no surprise that a black or navy design will best serve you, but try a technical fabric or soft leather to keep this classic modern-looking. Clearing from more obvious fabrics such as leather and nylon you can refresh your look while maintaining the versatility of the bomber jacket with safe colors that you can wear comfortably all year round. Field Jacket There are wardrobe classics, and then the field jacket, which manages to sit beautiful season after season, completely avoiding the fickle twists of fashion. Whether you're heading for a high-end heritage or enlisting a vintage design that might have actually graced the back of a serving military member, this average weight style is more than happy to play well with spring and summer staples likewise. Key style The fact that most modern versions barely deviate from the original military attire testifies to how well designed the field jacket was when it was first created. Some judicious changes will take this veteran from the battlefield to the men's territory, though. Look for contrasting hardware and a loose fit to stay true to the original design, but for a modern look look for oversized pockets and try faded shades like stone and pale green rather than simply sticking to khaki, field says. No need to break into the excess store. Down Gilet The vest down may have once been the preserve of the fobic country dwellers of the style, but thanks to a timely reassessment by designers who love practicality, the middle layer has become an essential even for city types. The beauty of down-filled styles is their weight - or lack thereof - and ease of use. It is a fact that you no longer get lost on luxury brands such as Brunello Cucinelli, which now juxtaposes padded vests above and below the jackets of the dress, cementing the place of this sleeveless wonder as a trans-seasonal essential. Key Style The vest will add a welcome injection of sportsmanship and function into your wardrobe, says Chris Gove, creative director of British brand Percival. But make sure you're closer to Johannes Huebl than Jeremy Clarkson looking for small design details. A polyester outer shell is fine, but watch out for anything super glossy and try a contrasting fabric yoke to move into design-driven territory, he says. The Coach Jacket The trainer jacket may not have the status of a familiar name for the varsity jacket, but just like its most famous teammate, it was born in the United States, worn by sports coaches as they walked on the touchline. Unsurprisingly, practicality is at the heart of the design: being light and waterproof hasn't been negotiable for this MVP all season. Many styles offered now retain those practical technical specifications and but use canny design to elevate the coach jacket from side to star player, whether his teammates are essential elements of streetwear or Scandinavian basics. Key Style A pointed collar, front pockets and snap hip are tributes you're looking at a trainer's jacket, but the style has become even more in the last two seasons thanks to an afterthought of this traditionally simple design. Try an option that keeps the practical and relaxed vibes of the style, but look for simple patterns or logo motifs to cheer the interest, says Higgins. All the function, all the fashion. Technical jacket Technical fabrics are great trans-seasonal companions thanks to their multitasking ability: they can be worn as rain or sun, over a T-shirt or above levels, depending on the forecast. And now both streetwear and high-end designers have fallen in love with the style's unpretentious aesthetic appeal. Adding nous menswear to the tech-heavy specifications of the jacket, the danger of looking like a hiker who took a wrong turn was greatly reduced. Key style Active-driven silhouettes such as the technical anorak as a must have items this season have emerged, combining seasonal flexibility with an outdoor shipping sensibility, says Michael Taylor, senior buyer at Urban Outfitters. The difference between off-course rambler and part-ironic and partly practical man don lies in the color of the technical jacket you stick on your back. The best examples reflect normcore nostalgia and dressing: choose retro, boxy, 90s color-blocking options that have visually appealing contrasting colors to make a strong statement, Taylor says. Peak return, but in the best possible sense. Trucker Jacket The trucker jacket has been a staple of casual wear for more than 150 years because it's so incredibly useful: it can accommodate many layers when the temperature isn't pleasant, but it will really gain its value on those days when you're not sure whether it's jacket time or not. Most importantly, this neat slice of American workwear can be easily worn with a pair of jeans and hiking boots or Chelsea. Just never pair it with a truck driver's cap. Key style The trucker jacket is a safe option and is not known to steer from one style to another season after season. To make sure yours isn't in the middle of the road, pay attention to the fabric and finish, gove says. She recommends wool, suede, corduroy or twill, although classic denim will never fall out of fashion. Don't even be tempted by lighter colors. Watch out for enzyme or low-cost stone washes; Dark Japanese denim is more trendy and, if possible, chooses crude, Gove says. Biker Jacket Cut short, asymmetrical and close to the body, the leather biker jacket proved to be one of the most timeless men's garments of the last century. It's one of those trans-seasonal garments that can be launched with anything and immediately makes you look endless degrees meaner. Blizzards aside, it's the closest thing you'll probably get to a four-season jacket as well, so there's no inappropriate time to buy one. Key style Although the biker is a perennially cool choice, cut and design details are key to separating heavenly skins from hells angels castoffs. The biker jacket has become a staple of style, but has evolved, says Sarah Gillfan of the personal tailoring lab consultancy. For a contemporary update, look for straps (which will also expand your shoulders) and choose versions that feature zips contrast and a matte finish to make this classic modern. Suede jacket Given its impressive permanence power over the past decade or so, it's hard to remember a time when the suede jacket was a left-field pick. Whether it's a bomber, blouse, motorcyclist or every man should have at least a soft and short fleece design at his disposal. It adds low-key luxury to the idleness dressing, and when it comes with the invisible suede protector armor, you don't need to have a meltdown if you're caught in a downpour. Key Style A black or navy suede bomber jacket is always a sure shout, but there are much more interesting ways to wear this buttery-soft outerwear. Seventies shades still have influence when it comes to the suede jacket, says Higgins. Think rust, orange, brown or burgundy– all these colors will add interest and can fit into your wardrobe with ease, in any season. Harrington Jacket The Harrington jacket is best known for being the de facto uniform of teenage subcultures after it found itself worn by a who's who of menswear icons (think Steve McQueen, Elvis, and James Dean) throughout the mid-20th century. Today's versions retain most of the original design features of the G9 Baracuta seminal, but technological developments on this side of the millennium have given the shape a new life. Examples of key Harrington-style textbooks go back outside and checked inside, but these days, you can flip the tradition upside down. [This year], options have been updated with external controls, and some styles are also available in tech fabrics, Higgins says. What should be on your checklist? Gingham and Prince of Wales cheques are the best solution, he says. Says.