

QUALITY

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO

OVER

IDENTIFYING HIGH-QUALITY CLOTHES

QUANTITY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

HELLO BOMBSHELL

WRITTEN BY JENAAE JACKSON

Quality Over Quantity

A Simple Guide To Spotting High-Quality Clothing

First Edition

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Foreword

Hello, Bombshell!

Building a solid grow up wardrobe of high-quality clothing is important. Try as you might, however, it sometimes seems that high-quality clothing is hard to come by.

These days, you order a lovely dress online, wear and wash it once, and before you know it, the color has faded and its shrunk 2 sizes. In the end, you've wasted money, and have one more item added to your closet of nothing to wear.

But what if you were armed with the knowledge to easily discern high-quality clothing from crap?

This ebook was born from my own frustration. For years I wasted money naively investing in crap clothing until I learned to understand identifying well-made garments to build a beautiful wardrobe that I love.

It is my hope that you too find this information helpful. And that by mastering the basics of identifying high-quality clothing, you'll be well on your way to shopping with confidence in your ability to select exceptional wardrobe pieces, and never be fooled into buying crap clothing again.

Enjoy! And until next time...

Stay fabulous,

Jenaae

Founder & Editor in Cheif, Hello Bombshell

Chapter 1

Fabric

Fabric is perhaps the most crucial component when assessing the quality of clothing. Yet most consumers have a hard time discerning true quality from complete crap.

HOW TO IDENTIFY HIGH-END FABRICS

Discerning high-quality fabric from low-quality fabric in clothing is two-fold. #1 - Identifying the best types of fabrics. #2 - Assessing the quality of fabrics.

When creating a high-quality garment, a designer is likely to opt for the most suitable, best quality, and finest of fabrics. But beware, as not all fine fabrics are made equally. Let's jump right in, shall we?

BEST TYPES OF FABRICS

High-end fabrics that typically look expensive.

Generally, fabrics and materials made of natural fibers are renowned as the high-end. Silk, cashmere, and leather, for example, have long been desired, and expensively priced in the fashion world; and for good reasons.

Although these natural fibers typically come with a pricey tag, when building a solid wardrobe, these fabrics are worth the investment. Not only do these materials look expensive, but they also feel luxurious, and will stand the test of time if cared for appropriately.

Among the most sought-after fabrics and materials, today include the following.

- Silk
- Wool
- Leather
- Linen
- Fur
- Cotton

TYPES of FABRIC + QUALITY

Identifying fabric types and assessing quality.

Silk

Well known for being decadent and exquisite, silk is the epitome of luxury and high-end fabric.

Silk is breathable, lightweight, and undeniably beautiful in appearance; perfect for classy and sophisticated wardrobe. And although fine, don't be quick to underestimate the durability of this precious fabric. Silk's tensile strength (the resistance of a material to breaking under tension), is the same as an iron wire of the same diameter.

Mulberry silk, is known to be the most expensive and luxurious of all silks. Mulberry silk is pure white in color, odorless, and 100% natural. It is made from the Silkworms of the Bombyx Mori Moth and is the most refined silk in the world.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying silk?

- Silk is especially known for its luster. The surface color of genuine silk should appear to change as the angle of the light changes.
- As silk is a natural fiber, it should feel warm to the touch when rubbed; unlike with artificial fibers.
- The sleek nature of genuine silk will allow you to easily pull a silk blouse, for example, through a finger ring without tugging.
- 100% genuine silk will be considerably more expensive than look-alike, or blended fabrics.

Wool | Cashmere

For ultimate warmth and comfort, look no further than wool. The most expensive in the world is Vucana wool. Harvested from the Vucana, the

national animal of Peru, this wool can only be collected/shorn, once every three years.

A type of wool known for its exceptionally soft quality, cashmere, is also synonymous with quality and luxury. Cashmere is made from the soft underbelly hair of Kashmir goats, which live in extremely cold and harsh climates primarily in Asia. To survive, they grow long, fine fibers to protect themselves.

Cashmere is incredibly smooth, almost silky to the touch, insulating, and long-lasting.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying cashmere wool?

- When looking to buy high-quality cashmere, “creamy is the best word to describe it...if you go into somewhere like Zara, you can feel that it’s just kind of dry. A cashmere sweater should feel almost springy when you squeeze it” says Carolyn Yim, designer of cashmere clothing line [Plyknits](#).
- Be sure to check the label. The Federal Trade Commission mandates that [cashmere products be appropriately labeled](#). Only pure cashmere sweaters can be labeled “100% Cashmere.”
- Although a slight sheen is possible, cashmere will typically have a matte appearance.
- Cashmere mixed with artificial fibers easily collect static electricity, which when rubbed together attract small particles like dust.

Leather | Suede

Leather, technically a raw material (rather than a fabric), is made from the skin of an animal by tanning or a similar process. Most commonly, leather is made of cattle, sheep, goat, and pigs.

Shell Cordovan is a type of leather with a mirror-like finish made of horsehide, used to make high-end shoes. Lamb, deer, elk skin, reptilian hide, kangaroo, ostrich, even stingrays are also used to make more high-end and exclusive leather goods.

Often confused as an entirely different material, suede is a particular finish of leather. Suede simply refers to the finish that gives the fabric a soft, fibrous effect.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying leather?

- You can identify genuine leather by its unique texture and smell. It should be soft and warm to the touch and have a distinctive aroma which is rich and appealing.
- Check the surface of leather for unique grain. Imperfections, in leather, are an indicator of genuine authenticity.
- Full Leather is most prestigious, followed by Top Leather, Genuine Leather, and lastly, Bonded Leather.

Linen

Linen is yet another high-end fabric that offers both quality and style.

Linen is made out of flax and is one of the oldest textiles in the world. In Europe, linen was a widely available fabric worn by peasants in medieval times. Today, however, linen is highly coveted for being stylish and cool; both literally and figuratively.

Luxury brand *100% Capri* features beautiful and stylish clothing, nearly exclusively linen in their stores. *100% Capri* maintains to carry the highest quality linen wear, and are prestigiously located in cities such as Miami, Dubai, St. Barths and off course Capri, Italy.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying linen?

- One great thing about linen is that it can easily pass itself off as expensive, even if you didn't fork over big bucks to add it to your wardrobe.

Fur

Undoubtedly the most controversial material in the market, fur throughout the ages has long been synonymous with luxury. Today, however, fur has become taboo; calling into question many ethical concerns.

Viewed by many as fashionably extravagant, fur is still worn today amongst the super elite.

While fur, even faux fur, may not be as practical as wools or leathers, the sheer opulence is hard to deny. High-quality faux furs can be worn as an alternative without ruffling any feathers.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying fur?

- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), shopping faux furs from companies like [Unreal Fur](#), [Jakke](#), and [FURious Fur](#) to get the fur look ethically.

Cotton

Natural fabrics are the holy grail of luxury fashion. They don't all have to break the bank, however.

Cotton is perhaps the most underrated of all the natural fabrics. However cotton is a wonderfully comfortable, durable, and low-maintenance fabric. Many fashion retailers today boast of their clothing being "100% cotton", however, not all cotton is made equal.

Assessing quality: What should you look for when buying cotton?

- 100% cotton is usually a good sign. Don't assume however that because a garment is 100% cotton, that the cotton is of high quality. Always assess 100% cotton garments case by case.
- Good quality cotton is made of long fibers, resulting in a fabric that is soft to the touch, and less prone to pilling.
- High-quality cotton will also be tightly woven. Hold a cotton garment up to the light and inspect to its density; good cotton should be thick and not too transparent.

MORE GREAT FABRICS

Fabrics that can look high-end, but won't break the bank.

Satin

Unlike silk, which is a raw material, satin is a type of weave. Although satin may be made of silk, it often contains a combination of other fabrics such as nylon, rayon, and/or polyester. Satin typically has both a glossy side and a dull side.

Charmeuse, for example, is very popular satin not made of silk. It is a man-made fabric from finely woven material including polyester.

If you don't quite have the bucks to drop on genuine silk just yet, a type of satin can be a suitable alternative. Try to opt for a more matte finish satin, as very shiny satin can look cheap.

Houndstooth

Houndstooth is cotton with duotone textile pattern, often in black and white, that's characterized by broken checks or abstract four-pointed shapes named for their resemblance to a dog's tooth.

I love houndstooth because its thick nature makes it look high end, and more expensive than it actually is.

Camel Wool

Camels produce longer fibers than sheep, which results in a more durable finished product.

Camel wool fibers tend to be finer than most merino wool, which results in a softer, more delicate feel. Many high-end winter coats are made of camel wool.

Denim

Denim is a sturdy cotton twill fabric, generally used to make garments such as jeans. Today denim is often blended with polyester to prevent wrinkles and control shrinkage when washing.

If your priority is immediate comfort, find a pair of denim created with anywhere from 2-5% stretch (elastane). Stretch fabrics, however, tend to wear out quicker than a 100% cotton jeans, which are typically more hardwearing.

Velvet

Velvet has long been considered one of the most luxurious fabrics available.

Velvet, which can be made from cotton or silk thread, giving it a slight sheen, is often used to make draperies, upholstery and accent pillows. If you come across a fabulous velvet article of clothing, be sure it's not velour or velveteen; which have a similar look but are not as thick and rich in appearance as the real thing.

FABRICS WE LOVE TO HATE

Among the most popular fabrics in fashion, today, are the highly controversial polyester and viscose/ rayon. But what the heck is are these "fabrics", and what's all the fuss about?

It goes without saying that synthetic fibers have earned themselves a slight stigma, and are considered inferior to natural fibers.

Polyester and viscose rayon are generally associated with looking cheap, being uncomfortable, and being bad for the environment. But with so many designers and retailers choosing to incorporate these materials into their garment design, surely they must have some positive points, right?

Viscose Rayon

Viscose, also known as rayon, is a chemically manufactured cellulose fiber made from wood pulp. Hence, viscose rayon is neither truly natural (like cotton, wool or silk) nor truly synthetic (like nylon or polyester) – it falls somewhere in between.

The Good

Viscose rayon is renowned for being inexpensive, easily blended with other fibers, and relatively breathable, light, and strong.

The Bad

Viscose rayon often requires dry cleaning, is prone to stretching and bagging, and the manufacturing process is extremely polluting to the environment.

Learn more about the [Advantages and Disadvantages of Viscose/Rayon](#).

Polyester

Polyester, on the other hand, is an entirely man-made synthetic fiber. I won't get into all the scientific jargon, but basically polyester is a type of plastic. Yet today, even high-end designers widely use polyester and poly blends in their garment design. So what's the deal?

The Good

Polyester is generally durable and is resistant to many chemicals, tends to be resistant to shrinking and stretching, it's also resistant to wrinkling, is lightweight, and retains its shape fairly well.

The Bad

Polyester can look cheap, can be uncomfortable (not breathable) to wear, and like viscose rayon, polyester is bad for the environment.

[A Closer Look into this "Love it or Hate it" Fabric.](#)

So what the takeaway from viscose rayon and polyester clothing?

From a style standpoint, many designers today incorporate these synthetic fibers in very fabulous clothing styles. This helps consumers save cost, and this sometimes even results in stronger, more resistant clothing.

Generally, I believe polyester should be chosen with reservation, but it can sometimes have its place in a curated wardrobe.

From an environmental standpoint, just as with using plastic in daily life, choosing 100% sustainable clothing can be equally challenging. At the very

least, it's important that we understand what these materials are when analyzing the contents in our garments so that we can all be more conscious consumers.

When contemplating synthetic fibers in garments, one should do so very selectively. Both for the sake of style, and our environment.

Chapter 2

Garment Construction

Equally important as fabric when assessing the quality of a garment, is being able to recognize proper garment construction and good craftsmanship. But unless you studied fashion design at some level, it's quite easy to be fooled.

With a basic understanding of quality garment construction, you're light years ahead of what retailers are betting on, and well on your way to making wiser wardrobe selections for life.

HOW TO IDENTIFY A WELL MADE GARMENT

Discerning well-made clothing, like identifying quality fabric of clothing, is two-fold. #1 - Recognizing good garment construction and quality tailoring. #2 - Identifying exceptional workmanship, finishing, and detail (to be discussed in Chapter 3).

Here are some basic points to inspect before handing over your hard earned cash on any item of clothing.

GARMENT CONSTRUCTION

Identify quality garment construction.

Tailoring

1. Appropriate structure seams.

Seams require an extra step and more material, so cheap manufacturers will forgo this detail completely. The time and expense saved during construction results in a garment that lacks appropriate shape and structure. A well-made jacket, coat, or dress will almost always have a center back seam or multiple seams that follow the natural curvature of the body. Cheap garments, for example, will many times have a single square piece of fabric across the back, sans back seams, which looks boxy.

2. Check for shoulder yoke when appropriate.

Certain styles of blouses and shirts should have a shoulder yoke, preferably a split shoulder yoke. This allows the top to sit neatly and offers a more comfortable, wide range of movement. Cheap blouses and shirts will often have the back and front of the shirt meet at a seam atop the shoulders.

3. Check for facings or interfacings.

Interfacing is a strong fabric sewn in between the layers of a garment to help it hold its structure. You will often find facing in the sleeve, neck opening, waistband, by the buttons, shoulders, and at the hem of a well-made garment. Facing and interfacing are especially crucial for jackets, skirts, and pants, but cheap clothing manufacturers will often skip this step to save money. While the garment will look fine on the hanger, without facings or interfacings, a garment can quickly lose its shape after a few wears or washes.

4. The garment fits as it should.

Cheap clothiers often cut costs by skimping on fabric as much as possible. That can translate to too-short sleeves, high water pant legs, or insufficient room through the shoulders of a garment; resulting in clothes that don't drape well or fit properly.

5. Generous inseams.

Even when a garment seemingly fits as it should, ensure inseams have room to be altered if necessary; especially if you're tall. Even if you do not need any extra room, this is an indicator of quality. The hem allowance is the width between the hemline and the hem edge. 1-½-inch to 2-inches is a decent amount of hem allowance for a pair of pants or skirt.

Stitching

6. Check for neat stitching.

Always turn a garment inside out in order to inspect the workmanship of the seams and stitching. Ensure that the seams throughout an article of clothing are straight, neat, and tight. Check for red flags such as loose threads,

unraveling, sloppy lines, loose stitching, and other imperfections which are indicators of cheap construction. Ensure seams do not appear to have been stitched over multiple times.

Caveat: If an item is hand-stitched, although a skilled seamstress will achieve a neat line, the human hand will inevitably create some “flair” in the stitching, and may not be as perfectly straight as machine stitching.

7. Ensure strong, sturdy stitching.

Check the strength of a garments stitching by grabbing either side of the fabric and very gently pulling apart. If the fabric at the seam separates, the seam is very weak and was most likely poorly sewn. Buttons and zippers should also be firmly attached.

8. Inspect the thread count.

Generally, the higher the stitch count, the better. This is because a higher stitch count takes more time, skill, and can be more expensive to achieve; a higher thread count makes for a stronger seam. Some designers, however, may intentionally opt for a lower stitch count to achieve a certain vintage or classic style aesthetic.

9. Neatly finished seams.

Unfinished edges are a telltale sign of poor quality construction. A serged seam, that distinct zig-zag pattern you can often see clearly on a lightweight garment such as t-shirts, is a fast and cheap garment seam. While ok for very lightweight garments like cotton t-shirts, this method is not suitable for heavier, tension bearing seams. Serged seams can look especially tacky when not folded under or properly hidden. Learn to identify French seams, flat-felled seams, and bound seams, which are good markers of quality.

Lining

10. Lining baby!

While not clothing requires a lining, many of them do. Lack of this simple detail can be an indicator of low-quality construction; especially for jackets and coats. Linings protect the interior of a garments outer shell from sweat and dirt, provides additional insulation and is typically made of a smooth material that feels nice on the skin. Additionally, linings provide some slip to minimize stretching of the garment's fabric, seriously prolonging its life.

11. Inspect quality of the lining.

Ok, so they don't skimp on the lining; but is the lining any good? Cheap linings are usually made of polyester, a cheap material that traps heat, and doesn't breathe at all. A high-quality lining will be made of silk or other breathable natural fibers. High-quality garments will also sometimes have very stylish linings that add an extra dimension of style to the garment. Linings are especially important in jackets, coats, skirts, and dresses.

Chapter 3

Workmanship

Continued from Chapter 2.

WORKMANSHIP & DETAIL

Identify quality garment finishing, details, and workmanship.

Workmanship

12. Ensure patterns match at the seams.

Just like wallpaper, fabric patterns should always match up precisely at the seams. This minor detail, as you can imagine, takes time and effort to achieve. Although terribly unsightly, cheap retailers are not afraid to cut corners by permitting mismatch at the seams.

13. Reinforced buttonholes.

High-quality garments will have a very thick, tightly stitched thread to reinforce the buttonholes. A strong keyhole style buttonhole is a marker of good craftsmanship and is especially good for well-made jackets and coats. You generally should not be able to see the raw edges of the fabric through loose buttonhole stitching.

14. Sturdy zippers.

Unless an exposed zipper is a design element, zippers should lie flat and be covered. Additionally, opt for zippers made of metal or other sturdy material. Plastic zippers are cheap, are hard to zip, and wear out quickly.

15. Hardy buttons.

Like zippers, buttons should also be made of high-quality materials. The material of buttons are made can tell you a lot about the quality of a garment overall. Plastic parts are typically an indicator that a piece of clothing is cheaply made. Always opt for robust buttons and hardware.

16. Quality thread.

A flimsy thread is a good indicator of flimsy construction. Take a minute to examine the quality of the thread that's been used to put the garment together. Does it appear to be strong enough to hold the fabric together? Could they have used something stronger? The thread should also match the fabric throughout the garment unless contrast between thread and fabric is intentional.

17. Extra buttons, threads, and beads, please.

A garment that comes with spare buttons, thread, beads, or other parts, is one the designer expects to be around long enough to require a few minor repairs.

18. Usable Pockets.

Don't you hate when you reach to put something in your pocket, only to realize they're sewn shut? WTH! Ensure the pockets on a garment are real and not faux!

Details

19. Not so simple sizing.

Although "Small", "Medium" or "Large" are typical, high-quality garments tend to size beyond simple sizing. Unlike an ordinary t-shirt, well-made garments are usually cut more precisely. Hence, high-end items tend to be sized numerically.

20. Made close to home.

Although "Made in China" doesn't always necessarily denote subpar construction, it does cut the cost of manufacturing substantially compared to garments made in Europe or made in the USA. When retailers make an effort to have their clothes made close to home, its an indicator that quality construction could also be a high priority for them.

Read on for a message from the author.

Afterword

Did you enjoy this ebook? Did you find this information helpful? Was anything missing that you'd like to learn?

Let us know, we'd love to hear from you!

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