

### **Buying Neckties Study Guide**

Most people buy at least one tie at some point in their life. Whether for a dress-up occasion, a required work uniform – such as wait staff at restaurants, or for a gift, ties are an important accessory. Ties can pull a look together, add accent and color, plus provide a visual message about the individual.

With over 150 years of history, the tie really has come a long way with many designers crafting high-quality versions. Given the many varieties, it is often difficult to select that perfect tie. The following criteria should be considered when shopping for ties:

#### **FIBERS**

Silk, wool and polyester or blends of these are the fibers most often found in ties. Silk is the most versatile, elegant, and appropriate choice for business and dress. All polyester and silk-polyester blends which look and feel like silk are also good choices. Wool and wool blends are good choices for cold weather while cotton, linen and rayon are more suitable for wear in warm weather.

**Silk** is the standard fiber for quality ties. It is used in many weaves and fabric types to produce ties that have an elegant appearance. Ties made from silk give a polished, but conservative look year-round in any climate.

**Wool** is made into fabrics that are handsome, long wearing and wrinkle resistant with a rich look. Wool and wool blend ties are appropriate for cold weather wear. The fabric may be knitted or woven. Many have a casual appearance, but some can be quite dressy.

**Cotton** is used for warm weather ties because of the light, cool feeling. It wrinkles easily but is low in cost. Cotton ties tend to be more casual than silk ones.

**Linen** is a brittle fiber and when made into fabric is easily crushed or wrinkled. These fabrics do not slip easily when tying. Linen ties are suitable for warm weather wear. Many are informal and resort like in appearance.

**Rayon** is a manmade cellulose fiber. It can be used alone or with other fibers to produce the fabric. Most rayon ties wrinkle easily.

**Nylon** is a manmade fiber that can be made into fabric that resembles silk. However, it usually has more shine. It is also wrinkle resistant.

**Polyester** is a manmade fiber that can be made into silk-like fabrics. It is wrinkle resistant. When blended with silk, wool, cotton or linen, it reduces wrinkling and cost.

**For more information, contact your local UGA Extension office at 1-800-ASK-UGA1.**

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**Acetate** is a manmade cellulose fiber with sheen. Acetate tie fabric tends to be somewhat stiff and bulky. This fabric wrinkles and creases easily.

**Acrylic** is a manmade fiber with a luxury hand. It is most like wool in appearance and is also crease resistant.

## **FABRICS**

Woven fabrics are generally used for quality ties. Common tie fabrics include: Basketweave, Brocade, Challis, Charvet, Faille, Foulard, Homespun, Jacquard, Madras, and Shantung.

These fabrics can be made in different patterns, colors, and designs such as novelty, stripes, plaids, paisley, etc. to create endless choices of quality ties suitable for any occasion.

## **PARTS OF A NECKTIE**

The shell, also known as the envelope, is the outermost fabric of a tie. Typically the tighter the fabric's weave, the less the tie will snag and fray. Generally, a tie should be cut on the "true bias" of the fabric. This means that it will be cut at a 45-degree angle, ensuring that the tie lays flat when worn and stays generally wrinkle-free. Before the method of cutting on the true bias was used, ties would twist and lose their shape after extended wear. Depending on the manufacturer, the shell will either be folded or cut into the shape of the tie.

### **The Shell**

#### **Four-in-Hand Ties**

The four-in-hand method of constructing a tie consists of three to four separate pieces of shell that is then sewn into the shape of the tie. Because of their simplistic construction method, these multi-piece ties are the most common.

#### **Six & Seven Fold Ties**

As opposed to constructing a tie from multiple pieces, folded ties are constructed from a single piece of shell. This method adds a handcrafted touch that requires a lengthy construction process. Though the number of folds that comprise the tie can vary, the seven-fold tie is the most popular. A seven-fold tie requires a seasoned artisan that is well versed in pattern making, sewing, and folding. Because of the amount of fabric that is used in this method of construction, there is no lining and the tie is able to hold its shape just by the shell alone.

#### **Interlining**

Interlining, or interfacing, is used in nearly all neckties—an exception being the six & seven fold variety. It is hidden between the layers of the tie's outer shell. Interlining helps create and maintain the shape of the tie and adds extra bulk and weight. Though weights vary, the lining is often made of a brushed wool blend to give ties a fuller shape. Because less shell fabric is required when interlining is used, the total cost of the necktie is significantly reduced. Manufacturers of cheap neckwear often skimp on the interlining resulting in ties that are either paper thin or stiff as a board.

#### **Tipping Styles**

There are three methods to finishing tips: un-tipped, self-tipped, and decorative tipping. Un-tipped ends forego the addition of a finishing fabric and instead expose the hem on the back of the tie. Un-tipped ties have a finished hem, so although they are un-tipped, they don't look

unfinished. Interlining on un-tipped ties is generally placed higher within the neck of the tie to avoid being exposed. A self-tipped tie is finished on the backside with the same fabric as the self of the tie. Whether the tie is folded or cut, the tip will be cut as a separate piece to then be sewn on. Decorative tipping uses a different fabric than the rest of the tie. This tipping is commonly a solid color but can be just about anything.

#### The Rolled Edge

The edge of a necktie is rolled and pressed. This ensures fullness at the edge as opposed to a flat crease.

#### The Slip-Stitch

Along the back of the tie, holding the tie together, there is a hidden stitch called a slip-stitch. It goes in and out of the center without being exposed at the surface.

#### The Keeper Loop

The self-loop, or “keeper loop”, is the loop that holds the tie tail. On most ties, the manufacturer will include two loops: the actual loop and a label that doubles as one.

#### The Bar Tack

Near each tip, one will find a short horizontal stitch. This stitch is called the bar tack. It is the end of the slip stitch which is stitched over once or several times to secure the closure, making sure the tie doesn't come undone.

#### Care & Origin Tag

These tags contain details and information about a necktie. This may include country of origin, materials, and care instructions.

#### The Slip Knot

On the more expensive handmade ties there will sometimes be a loop – a slip knot– which peaks out from the blade tip. With wear, and years of tying and untying, a tie will stretch. The slip knot allows the wearer to adjust the tension as the tie ages, returning its original shape and thus expanding its lifetime.



## SHELL

Also known as the "Envelope," the shell is the outermost fabric of a necktie. This fabric is cut "on the bias" (45 degrees to its warp and weft threads) to allow flexibility and maintain shape.

## NECK

The "neck" is the middle section of a necktie.

## KEEPER LOOP

The "keeper loop" is an extra piece of fabric that is sewn onto the backside of the wider end (blade) of a necktie. When the tail of a tie is placed through this loop (after knotting) it helps to keep the tail out of sight.

## LABEL

Most neckties include a label that is sewn below the keeper loop. This label displays the manufacturer or brand of the necktie. The tail may also be inserted through this loop for added security.

## BAR TACK

The bar tack is a heavy stitch that holds the two sides of a necktie together. It reinforces the slip stitching and helps a necktie maintain its shape. You may also find a bar tack on the tail of a necktie.

## BLADE

The blade is the main lower section of a necktie.

## TIPPING

"Tipping" is the fabric that is sewn onto the backside of the tip and tail of a necktie. "Decorative tipping" uses a fabric that is different than the shell of the tie while "self-tipping" uses the same fabric as the shell.

### SELF-TIPPING



## SEAM

Most neckties are constructed from 3-4 separate pieces that are sewn together. You'll commonly find a seam located about halfway along the length of a necktie. This seam should not be visible when knotted.

## INTERLINING

Hidden between the folds of the outer shell is the interlining. Interlining plays a major role in giving a tie shape, weight and bulk. The interlining of a quality necktie is commonly made of brushed wool. 6 & 7 fold ties do not use interlining.

## ROLLED EDGE

The edge of a necktie (where the shell goes from the front to the back) is rolled and carefully pressed. This ensures a fullness at the edge as opposed to a flat crease.

## TAIL

The "tail" is the narrow end of a tie that hangs behind the larger end when knotted.

## CARE & ORIGIN TAG

Care & origin tags contain details and information about a necktie. This may include country of origin, materials used and special care instructions.

## SLIP STITCH

Made with a long single thread and running the entire length of a necktie, this hidden stitching holds the two overlapping sides together and helps a necktie regain its shape after wear. The slip stitch is sewn loosely to prevent breakage from repeated knotting.

## MARGIN/HEM

The "margin" is the distance from the edge of the blade to the tipping. The "hem" is the finishing stitch that connects the shell to the tipping. Together the margin and hem allow for a soft rounded edge and keep the tipping hidden when seen from the front.

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## **Types of Ties**

Below are 8 different types of ties, and how you can incorporate them into your wardrobe.

### **Four in Hand Necktie**

This is the tie most of us are familiar with. It's a staple in most offices and is certainly appropriate for most formal occasions. This type of tie can come in a variety of widths, colors, patterns, and material, so the options are endless. Knots are another way to add some spice to this classic. After you've mastered the Windsor Knot, there are TONS of other more detailed knots that you can try!

### **The Seven Fold Tie**

A close cousin to the four-in-hand tie, this style is made from a square yard of silk that is - you guessed it - folded seven times. Because of the way this tie is made it doesn't have a lining, but it is thick meaning that you can form a really nice knot with very little effort. This type of tie is again great for the office or a formal event. Due to the material, these ties can be a bit pricey, so it may be one you pull out only for special occasions.

### **Skinny Necktie**

Another variation of the four-in-hand tie, skinny ties became popular in the 50's and 60's with bands like the Beatles wearing them onstage. These ties are still popular today and are great for the office, but still look sharp for a night out. Skinny ties are great to wear with jeans for an stylish, but edgy look.

### **Bowtie**

The bowtie can be a fun alternative to the everyday tie and is a must have for truly formal events. They are extremely popular in the Southern states and therefore perfect to pair with a seersucker suit. This type of tie can be used in a variety of setting from Balls to cocktail parties to everyday wear.

### **Western Bowtie**

This is a variation of the classic bowtie, and was Southern staple, both in the southeast and the west. Most people might think of Colonel Sanders when they see this style of tie. While still popular in the southwest as formal wear, it comes off as a bit too casual for other regions.

### **Bolo Tie**

Bolo ties became quite popular in the 70's and have been worn ever since then by baby boomers who like activities like gold panning and making dream catchers (Fun fact: it became the official neckwear of Arizona in 1971 - New Mexico and Texas also have signed laws stating the same for their states). This groovy piece of man jewelry has made a small comeback in recent years, but unless you live in the southwest it may not be work appropriate.

### **Cravat**

A dressier variation of the cravat, the ascot is typically pinned rather than knotted. It is used for formal occasions, though some military uniforms use an ascot as opposed to a standard tie. This type of neckwear earned its name by being the choice of neckwear on race day at the Ascot Racecourse in England.

## **Neckerchief**

Possibly one of the most overlooked options in neckwear, it's common to see scouts wear these as part of their uniform. This type of tie is not formal, unless required with a uniform, so therefore isn't appropriate for most work or formal occasions. It is, however, a great and unique way to dress up your everyday wear.

## **CARE**

Proper care will prolong the life of a tie. After each wearing, the tie should be untied when you take it off. Knots left in the tie can cause permanent wrinkles. Hang the tie on a tie rack or over a hanger or bar, allowing two or three days between wearings. Most wrinkles will fall out.

Removing spots from ties is not guaranteed. Most spots should be removed by a professional dry cleaner.

Tie finishes such as waterproofing and stain resistant fabric can help prevent spills and spots, but may also add additional cost. However, the extra cost may prevent the loss of a favorite tie which may be worth the higher price.

Using these tips, you can successfully choose a tie that meets your needs and style as well as your budget.