
Perfect FITTING Dress Shirts

By Frank A. Schipani



ROBERT TALBOTT

Did you know that most men wear their shirts too tight at the neck? Look around, wherever you're standing, right this second: Unless you're in the shower, you'll likely observe collars too close to the throat, crushed ties, and (even worse!) collar tips leaning upward from all that lateral tension. There are several causes:

Cause: Commercial laundries press with machines that "crush" a shirt and shrink it.

Remedy: Have your shirts hand-pressed. It pushes the fabric in the right direction to retain proper size and shape.

Cause: A new shirt is a half-inch bigger at the collar to allow for shrinkage.

Remedy: Judge the fit after three washes. Get to know the "character" of your favorite shirt brands.

Cause: Neck size increases one-half-inch for every eight pounds of body weight gain. Aging alone causes the neck (like waistlines) to get a little fuller.

Remedy: Have your sales consultant measure your neck the next time you're in, and always go up a half size. If you measure 15 ¹/₂, go up to a 16.

I'm serious here: When dressed in a coat and tie, your collar area becomes the focal point for your entire appearance. Therefore, the collar should be loose enough to rest on your neck and not feel snug in order to accommodate the tie to the top of the neckband. In the course of a day, your neck expands and contracts as you speak (it's wrapped in muscles) and calls out for a comfortable collar. Frank Sinatra and other nightclub singers always had their collars made an inch larger because of muscle expansion as they performed for hours! Opera singers do the same.

Okay: we now have our comfortable collar, what collar style should we be wearing? Some experts suggest that a full face should never wear a wide spread and a long face should never wear a long point collar. What do I say? If the collar fits well, is stylish in its design, and sports the right tie (knotted and dimpled properly), then go for it. Break some rules—it's good for your soul as well as your appearance.

I always get compliments on my wide, spread high-collared shirts though my neck is low and my face full and round. This is a result of proper fit and atten-

tion to detail, i.e. hand-pressed, dimpled tie, comfortable collar.

As another guide, take a studied look at the collar/tie vortex of any nighttime TV anchorman (sorry, Katie). Note the balance of comfort and style because the collar fits correctly, is properly pressed (no starch please) and the tie sits up to the top of the neckband, properly arched and dimpled. The best way to do achieve this look is to work closely with your in-store consultant, pairing different knots with different collars while you're in the store.

Let's not forget the other part of the shirt that reflects style: your cuff.

It should always stop at the base of your thumb. It's best to err on the side of long versus short. If you wear custom shirts, make sure you make the wrist-watch arm a little larger to accommodate the watch. Our sales associates will help you with this.

If you wear French cuffs, keep the links neat and no wider than a dime. Antique chain links are really chic!

And regardless of the style, make sure cuff exposure is at least $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the suit sleeve. I see too many men showing no cuff and it makes me think they're wearing their father's suit!

Lastly, always launder your new shirts before wearing, to close up the "pores" of the fabric, especially at the neck where beard and skin oils can penetrate and cause damage. More importantly, a new shirt—properly washed and pressed—always looks better than wearing one just out of the box. But you knew that.

Frank A. Schipani is the founder of the Schipani Group, a sales training, image-building organization, specializing in apparel for both the wholesale and retail community.



ALEX PALOMBO PHOTOGRAPHY



Paying attention to details like the collar, cuff and hem will ensure that you are wearing the shirt, and not the other way around.

A crisp white shirt always works, but come in and view the latest colors and patterns, and we'll help you update and expand your wardrobe, creating a look that's best for you.



ROBERT TALBOTT