THE

GENTLEMAN'S WARDROBE

The old English way to look sharp after sixty — mostly with clothes you already own



ARTHUR

82 · THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

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How to Use This Book

Hello, my friend.

This book is meant to live by your wardrobe, not on a shelf. Read it once from beginning to end, slowly, with a cup of tea. Then come back to the chapter you need, on the morning you need it.

It is written in seventeen parts:

- **Part I — Know Your Fit.** Before anything else, we measure you as you are today. Most of what makes a man look older is simply clothes in the wrong size.
- **Part II — The Great Clear-Out.** The things that quietly add years, and the swap for each one.
- **Part III — The Ten-Piece Wardrobe.** The few good British pieces worth owning, and how they work together.
- **Part IV — Warm and Smart in Winter.** Dressing from the skin out, the way our fathers did.
- **Part V — The Tailor and the Charity Shop.** How to dress well on a fixed income, and make good clothes last twenty years.
- **Part VI — Every Occasion.** Church, weddings, funerals, the doctor's, Christmas Day, and the rest.
- **Part VII — Your Shape and Your Colours.** A fuller middle, a shorter or taller frame, and the colours that suit silver hair.
- **Part VIII — Grooming and the Finishing Touches.** The haircut, shaving, glasses, and smelling fresh every day.
- **Part IX — Putting It All Together.** Shopping lists for every budget, a 30-day plan, and twelve outfits to copy.
- **Part X — Everyday Life After Sixty.** Stiff hands, sore feet, the washing machine, summer heat, hats, slippers, the hospital bag, and dressing after illness.

- **Part XI — The Old English Ways.** Old money on a pension, what our fathers knew in the 1950s, thirty old winter tricks, and seven things worth buying once for life.
- **Part XII — Shoes for Life.** How a good shoe is made, the cobbler, polishing like our fathers did, and wet days, salt and winter boots.
- **Part XIII — The Suit and the Finishing Pieces.** The one good suit, black shoes or brown, ties and knots, braces and side adjusters, the watch, the hat and the umbrella.
- **Part XIV — Shopping Wisely.** Reading a label, where to buy what, buying online, a guide for American readers, and dressing well on a pension.
- **Part XV — Looking After It All.** Mending at home, stains and moths, and storing clothes between seasons.
- **Part XVI — The Man in the Clothes.** What I wish I'd known at sixty, posture and presence, and getting dressed every morning.
- **Part XVII — The Playbooks.** Eighteen short plans you open on the day: a wedding, a funeral, the clear-out, the tailor, the charity shop, the first frost, Christmas, a week away, a hospital stay, a cruise, Remembrance Sunday, a summer party, and more.

At the back you'll find ten Wardrobe Cards to print and pin up, the Tailor's Sheet to take to any alterations shop, a Yearly Wardrobe Calendar, eight Checklists and seven Worksheets. After that come the sources for every bit of history in the book, and an index, so you can find anything in a moment.

Every chapter ends with **The Test**: one small thing to do in front of the mirror, usually tonight, usually for nothing. Do the test before you buy anything. You will be surprised how often the answer is already hanging in your cupboard.

And please don't try to change everything at once. One chapter, one small errand, one week. That is how good habits are built at any age.

A word on money. Prices in this book are given in pounds and in dollars, and they are typical, not promises. Prices change, shops differ, and a good charity shop can beat any figure I give you.

CHAPTER 8

THE SHORT PUFFER JACKET

From November to March, your coat is your outfit

If you change only one thing after reading this book, let it be this one.

From November to March, your coat *is* your outfit. It's what people see at the bus stop, at the shop, at your grandson's school play. And a puffy jacket that ends at the widest part of you draws a thick line across your middle, then stacks rolls of padding on top of it. *It isn't your figure. It's the stitching on the jacket.*

In 1894, a Scotsman called John Barbour opened a small shop in South Shields on the North Sea coast, selling oilskin coats to sailors, fishermen and dock workers. Over the years that became the waxed cotton jacket, worn by farmers, gamekeepers and in time the Royal Family. It's a good coat because it was made for weather, not fashion.

The swap. One of two things. A waxed cotton jacket in olive, navy or brown, cut to cover your seat. Or a wool overcoat that falls to the knee, in navy, charcoal or camel. A longer coat gives one long line from shoulder to knee, and that makes a man look taller and steadier.

Miss the warmth of the puffer? Wear a thin padded waistcoat *underneath* your coat. Nobody will ever know.

Judging a coat in a shop:

1. The shoulder seam sits where your own shoulder ends.
2. The sleeve stops at your wrist bone, arms down.
3. Squeeze a corner of the cloth and let go. Good wool springs back.

4. Lift your arms. If the whole coat rides up to your ears, put it back.



FIG. 8-A Same man, same day. Only the clothes changed.

WHAT CHANGED

- No thick line across the middle
- One long line from shoulder to knee
- Taller and steadier

ARTHUR'S TRICK

Miss the warmth of your puffer? Wear a thin padded waistcoat under your wool coat. Nobody will ever know.

GOING FURTHER

WHY THE SHORT PUFFER ADDS YEARS

A puffer that stops at the waist cuts you in half across the widest part of the body. The shiny nylon looks like sportswear, and the quilting adds bulk. It's a coat designed for young people on the move.

WHAT TO WEAR INSTEAD

- **A wool overcoat** that covers the seat or comes to the knee.
- **A waxed jacket** — waterproof and smart in the country.
- **A duffle coat** — warm, easy toggles, very British.
- **A quilted jacket** in a dark colour with a cord collar — smart and light.

GETTING WARMTH WITHOUT THE PUFFER

Layer	What to wear
Next to the skin	Merino vest
Middle	Shirt + lambswool jumper or cardigan
Under the coat	A thin padded waistcoat (gilet)
Outside	Wool coat, scarf, gloves, cap

This combination is as warm as a big puffer and looks far smarter.

JUDGING A COAT IN THE SHOP

1. Lift your arms: the coat shouldn't ride up past your waist.
2. Sit down: it should not pull across your stomach.
3. Check the lining: it should be smooth and sewn in.
4. Read the label (Chapter 27).

> ✗ COMMON MISTAKES
>
> - A short coat that stops at the widest point.
> - No layers under the coat, so it has to be huge.
> - Shiny nylon with a big logo.

QUESTIONS MEN ASK

I love my puffer for the cold.

Keep it for dog walks in the rain. For everything else, a wool coat with a thin padded waistcoat underneath is as warm.

What length should a winter coat be?

At least covering your seat; just above the knee is warmest and most flattering.

> THE TEST
> Put on your winter coat and look side-on in the mirror. Does it stop at your middle? Then it's adding years, and probably letting the cold in too.

DO THIS NOW

- ☐ Check your coat side-on: does it stop at your middle? **(Free.)**
- ☐ Look for a long wool coat or waxed jacket in two charity shops. **(Free to look.)**
- ☐ Buy a thin padded waistcoat to wear underneath if you feel the cold.

CHAPTER 27

THE WINTER COAT

A blanket, not a tablecloth



FIG. 27-A The Winter Coat.

Most men think they have a good winter coat. Open the wardrobe and look closely. Many coats sold today look like wool and are mostly polyester with a little wool mixed in. They're about as warm as a bin bag.



FIG. 27-D Left: a short jacket that stops at the middle. Middle: a coat that covers the seat. Right: a long wool overcoat above the knee, the warmest of the three.

Two good choices:

The wool overcoat. In 1805, John Crombie and his son James started a woollen business near Aberdeen. They wove cloth so good that London's finest tailors bought it, and the name still means a smart, dark overcoat.

The duffle coat. The cloth was named after Duffel, a town in Belgium. The Royal Navy turned it into the coat we know, worn on open bridges through two world wars, with wooden toggles you could do up with frozen fingers. Field Marshal Montgomery wore one so often it was called the Monty coat. Around 1951, Harold and Freda Morris bought up the Navy's surplus and sold them to the public; their company, Gloverall, still makes them.

The coat check — four steps:

1. **The label.** Turn it inside out. At least 70% wool. Below 50%, you're mostly wearing plastic.
2. **The weight.** Hold it up by the collar. A winter coat feels heavy, like a blanket, not a raincoat.

3. **The length.** Just above or just below the knee. Your legs stay warm and you look taller.
4. **The colour.** Navy, charcoal or camel, so everything else goes with it.

The secret. Good wool overcoats from the 1970s and 1980s turn up in charity shops for £30 or £40, made of better cloth than most new ones. Look for heavy wool, a full lining and a British maker's label. Give it a good brush and hang it on a wide wooden hanger.



FIG. 27-B Same man, same day. Only the clothes changed.

WHAT CHANGED

- A shiny nylon anorak swapped for a wool duffle coat
- Long enough to cover the seat and more
- The same walk, but he looks like a gentleman

STEP BY STEP

Step 1 of the coat check



FIG. 27-C Turn it inside out and read the label: at least 70% wool

GOING FURTHER

COAT STYLES FOR OLDER MEN

Coat	Look	Warmth
Chesterfield	Smart, knee length	High
Covert coat	Short, country, light brown	Medium
Crombie-style overcoat	Dark, smart	High
Duffle coat	Casual, toggles	High
Waxed jacket	Country, waterproof	Medium
Raincoat (mac / trench)	Smart, light	Low

THE FOUR-STEP COAT CHECK, IN DETAIL

1. **The label.** At least 70% wool. Cashmere blends are softer; polyester-heavy coats are lighter and colder.
2. **The weight.** Hold it up by the collar: a good wool coat feels heavy.
3. **The length.** At least covering the seat; just above the knee is best.
4. **The colour.** Navy, charcoal or camel go with everything.

FITTING

- Wear a jumper or jacket when trying it on.
- Shoulders should sit on your shoulders.
- Sleeves should cover a jacket cuff.
- Lift your arms — the coat shouldn't climb too high.

COAT CARE

Brush after each wet wear. Dry on a wide hanger at room temperature. Have it cleaned once a season if needed. Store in a cotton bag over summer.

> ✗ COMMON MISTAKES
>
> - Buying by colour without reading the label.
> - A coat too tight to fit a jumper underneath.
> - Dry-cleaning a wool coat too often.

QUESTIONS MEN ASK

Is a charity shop coat hygienic?

Air it for a day, brush it well, and have it dry-cleaned once if you like.

What's the warmest coat?

A heavy wool coat with at least 70% wool, long enough to cover your seat.

> **THE TEST**
> Hold your coat up by the collar with one hand and close your eyes. If it feels like a blanket, it's a winter coat. If it feels like a tablecloth, it isn't.

DO THIS NOW

- ☐ Read the label inside your winter coat. **(Free.)**
- ☐ Hold it up by the collar with your eyes closed. **(Free.)**
- ☐ Brush it and swap its wire hanger for a wooden one. **(Free.)**
- ☐ Look for a 1970s–80s wool overcoat in a charity shop.

PLAYBOOK P6

THE FIRST COLD SNAP

The first frost catches most older men out. Do this the evening the forecast says it's coming.

THE EVENING BEFORE

☐ Lay out a merino vest and wool long johns (Chapter 22).

☐ Wool socks, the long kind (Chapter 23).

☐ Your winter trousers: flannel, cord or moleskin (Chapter 24).

☐ Shirt, wool jumper or cardigan (Chapter 25).

☐ Coat, scarf, gloves and cap by the front door (Chapters 26–27).

☐ Check the soles of your winter shoes for grip (Chapter 26).

☐ Put the heating on a timer so the house is warm when you get up. The NHS advises at least 18°C in the rooms you use.

ON THE MORNING

☐ Dress in layers from the skin out.

☐ Look at the path before you step out. Ice is worst first thing and in shade.

☐ Small steps, hands out of your pockets.

CARD 3 — THE COAT CHECK

1. **The label** — at least 70% wool
2. **The weight** — heavy, like a blanket, held by the collar
3. **The length** — just above or below the knee
4. **The shoulders** — seam where my shoulder ends
5. **The sleeves** — stop at my wrist bone
6. **The squeeze** — good wool springs back
7. **The lift** — raise my arms; it mustn't ride up to my ears

ENJOYED THIS CHAPTER?

It's one of seventy-nine in *The Gentleman's Wardrobe*, with 18 playbooks, 23 before-and-after pages, a 12-outfit lookbook, ten Wardrobe Cards, 8 checklists, 7 worksheets, the Tailor's Sheet and a Yearly Calendar.

Get the whole book at arthurswardrobe.netlify.app

ABOUT ARTHUR



Arthur grew up in a little stone cottage in the English countryside, where the only heating was a coal fire in the front room and his father taught him to knot a tie before he could ride a bicycle.

He is the host of *Arthur's Wardrobe* on YouTube, where he shares the quiet British way of dressing well after sixty: what quietly adds years, what to wear instead, and the little piece of history behind every classic.

He still brushes his tweed jacket after every wear, still airs his jumpers by the window, and still believes that a gentleman never retires.

Arthur is the channel's host character. Write to him through the link under any of his videos — he reads every letter.