



Photos: Bowen Fernie; Collage by Brittany Loggins

Shopping

The Best Clothing Brands for Men to Build a Wardrobe from Scratch

Better basics for bigger fits.



By **Gerald Ortiz**

March 12, 2025

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Whether you're a **seasoned fashion vet** or a fresh-faced menswear noob, basics are the foundation of every great wardrobe. Sure, it's incumbent on the best clothing brands for men to push the envelope to new limits, but before you get there, you need to start from square one. Even **GQ** editors had to master the fundamentals, and even Tyler, the Creator has a go-to **plain white tee**.

A crisp **Oxford shirt**; the perfect bodega-run **sweatshirt**; a roomy pair of **chinos**—these are the mitochondria of your wardrobe's cells, if you will, the powerhouses that keep your style stable from season to season, year after year. But just because a white T-shirt boasts designer origins doesn't mean it's worth the money. So we gathered the best men's clothing brands to stock up on right now, 21 labels that consistently deliver unbeatable value, craftsmanship, and versatility—along with a handful of other tried-and-true men's fashion brands to help you on your journey.

The Not-So-Basic Wardrobe Basics Every Guy Should Own

- **The Cropped Workwear Jacket:** [Abercrombie & Fitch Cropped Zipped Workwear Jacket](#), \$150
- **The Upgrade Tee:** [CDLP Midweight T-Shirt](#), \$98
- **The Versatile Button-Up:** [Alex Mill Striped Poplin Mill Shirt](#), \$165
- **The Slightly-Looser Levi's:** [555 Relaxed Straight Jeans](#), \$98
- **The Summer-Weight Knit:** [Beams Plus Mohair-Blend Sweater](#), \$485
- **The Comfiest Nike Sweats:** [Nike Club Knit Joggers](#), \$55
- **The Do-Anything Shorts:** [Patagonia Baggies Shorts](#), \$65

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- **The Leveled-Up Zipped Sweater:** [Lady White Co. McCallum Zipper](#), \$298
- **The Unstructured Linen Suit Jacket:** J.Crew Ludlow Jacket in Irish Cotton-Linen, \$298

In This Shopping Guide



- The One-Stop-Shops
- The Elevated Underpinnings
- The Workday Workhorses
- The Weekend Warriors
- The Reliable Upgrades

The One-Stop-Shops

J.Crew

J.Crew is well past its early-2010s heyday of Italian blazers, selvedge jeans, and loafers, but under the direction of streetwear royalty Brendon Babenzien it remains the best place to find quintessential preppy staples at prices that belie the quality involved. The brand still makes some great suiting, which can get you by at the office (or even nab you a promotion), but its east coast history means you can also sink into some sumptuous cable knit sweaters and Madras button-ups. And don't forget to check out their in-house workwear-inspired label, Wallace & Barnes, which could easily pass as true vintage grails.

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**J.Crew**

Cashmere Crewneck Sweater

\$138 J.CREW

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**J.Crew**

Classic Chino Pant

\$98 J.CREW

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**J.Crew**

Broken-in Organic Cotton Oxford Shirt

\$90 J.CREW

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**J.Crew**

Ludlow Slim-fit unstructured suit jacket in Irish cotton-linen blend

\$298

J.CREW

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Dads love a deal, and dads love L.L.Bean. That affection is largely due to the unbeatable value proposition the brand offers on the build-blocks gear your old man wears on the daily. Be more like your dad. You might know them for their famed Bean boot. Good! But you should also know them for their **top-tier flannel shirts**, surprisingly sturdy denim, and classically gorp-y outdoor gear.



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Scotch Plaid Flannel Shirt

\$50
L.L.BEAN

**L.L.Bean**

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\$109
L.L.BEAN**L.L.Bean**

Adults' Merino Wool Ragg Socks

\$40

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**L.L.Bean****Stretch Country Corduroy Pants**

\$70
L.L.BEAN

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There's something of a formula to how Abercrombie has been getting its basics so right: classic staples are imbued with a bit of volume and a dash of archive inspiration, and everything clocks in at prices that won't make you blanche. These days, Abercrombie's clothes feel nostalgically like how **mall brand clothes used to feel**—substantial and well-made, yet easy to wear from day one. This all adds up to mean that you can easily turn to Abercrombie and Fitch to build the foundation of your whole wardrobe, or just use certain pieces as spackle to cover up some of your existing closet gaps.

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**Abercrombie & Fitch**

Baggy Jean

\$90

ABERCROMBIE & FITCH

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**Abercrombie & Fitch**

Cropped Zipped Workwear Jacket

\$150

ABERCROMBIE & FITCH

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**Abercrombie & Fitch**

Cropped Stitched Sweater Shirt Jacket

\$90 \$54 (40% OFF) ABERCROMBIE & FITCH
--

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**Abercrombie & Fitch**

Textural Striped Johnny Collar Sweater Polo

\$60 \$42 (30% OFF)
ABERCROMBIE & FITCH

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Levi's makes a whole lot of clothes that the opposite of basic—think: pearl-snap Western shirts—but, c'mon, no one makes more consistent jeans and denim jackets. And just because it invented the 501, that doesn't mean it isn't constantly updating its line to make the perfect basics for this decade—from slightly more relaxed jeans to runway-ready denim jackets. It even has a fancier sibling, [Levi's Vintage Clothing](#), where the brand gleefully revives entirely faithful riffs on its archive grails.

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**Levi's****501 Original Fit Men's Jeans**

\$80 \$70 (13% OFF) LEVI'S

\$80 \$40 (50% OFF) AMAZON

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**Levi's****Barstow Western Denim Shirt**

\$80 \$56 (30% OFF) LEVI'S

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**Levi's Vintage Clothing****1953 Type II Jacket**

\$405

LEVI'S

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**Levi's****555 Relaxed Straight Jeans**

\$98

LEVI'S

\$98 \$73 (26% OFF)

AMAZON



Todd Snyder

Todd Snyder's basics are so sophisticated, even his weekend clothes and Champion sweats are nice enough to wear to dinner. And that's only the beginning. The designer darling of the menswear world has an unrivaled CV which includes stints at Ralph Lauren and J.Crew. What does that mean? It means he's mastered the modern dude's wardrobe from head to toe. Think impeccable suiting, boss-level coats, and Japanese denim, not to mention an all-star roster of collaborators including Paraboot, Private White V.C., Moscot, Timex, and more.

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**Todd Snyder**

Beechwood Organic Cotton Polo

\$298 TODD SNYDER

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**Todd Snyder**

Champion Midweight Pocket Sweatshirt

\$98

TODD SNYDER

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**Todd Snyder**

Silk Henley

\$328 TODD SNYDER

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**Todd Snyder**

Italian Suede Dean Jacket

\$1,398
TODD SNYDER[SHOP TODD SNYDER](#)

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Come for the Christophe Lemaire-designed pants or the ridiculously warm puffers, but don't leave without a stack of ribbed socks and soft cotton boxers—a.k.a. the real prize of shopping at Uniqlo. Uniqlo offers some of the most style for your buck, which is why it's a regular among our Best Stuff articles. Its button-ups are well-crafted, the raw denim jeans are consistently some of the best for the price (good luck finding a pair before they sell out), and you can always bet on a sick collaboration every season.

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**Uniqlo**

Wide Straight Jeans

\$50 UNIQLO

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**Uniqlo**

AIRism Cotton Oversized T-Shirt

\$20 UNIQLO

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**Uniqlo**

Sweat Full-Zip Hoodie

\$50 UNIQLO

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**Uniqlo****Ultra Light Down Jacket**\$80
UNIQLO[SHOP UNIQLO](#)



The Elevated Underpinnings

Calvin Klein

It pays to invest in your underwear. You don't need to spring for the highest-end luxury undies, there are options that are a great value. The best among them has to be Calvin Klein who revolutionized men's underwear with his perfectly-fitting boxer briefs and trunks, not to mention his iconic ad campaigns. His boxer briefs have been among our favorites for years, but don't sleep on his undershirts, either.

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**Calvin Klein**

Cotton Classics Boxer Brief (3-Pack)

\$46 \$24 (48% OFF)

AMAZON

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**Calvin Klein**

Cotton Classics Knit Boxer (3-Pack)

\$46 \$24 (48% OFF)

AMAZON

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**Calvin Klein**

Cotton Classics Undershirt (3-Pack)

\$46 \$21 (54% OFF)

AMAZON

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**Calvin Klein**

Cotton Classics Tank (3-Pack)

\$46 \$20 (57% OFF) AMAZON

CDLP

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we've ever tested. It all comes down to the fit and fabric choice.

luxurious to the touch and built for the long haul.

**CDLP****Woven Boxer Shorts Slim**

\$85

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**CDLP****Boxer Brief**

\$38 CDLP

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**CDLP**

Midweight T-Shirt

\$98

CDLP

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**CDLP****Merino Blend Long Sleeve T-Shirt**

\$195

CDLP

[SHOP CDLP](#)

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If you love fresh-outta-the-box tees but want to indulge consciously, Everybody.World makes deeply excellent T-shirts using 100% recycled fabrics and ethical labor practices.

**Everybody.World****JAS Mockneck Trash Tee**

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**Everybody.World**

Trash Sweatpants

\$88 EVERYBODY.WORLD

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**Everybody.World**

Trash Hoodie

\$108

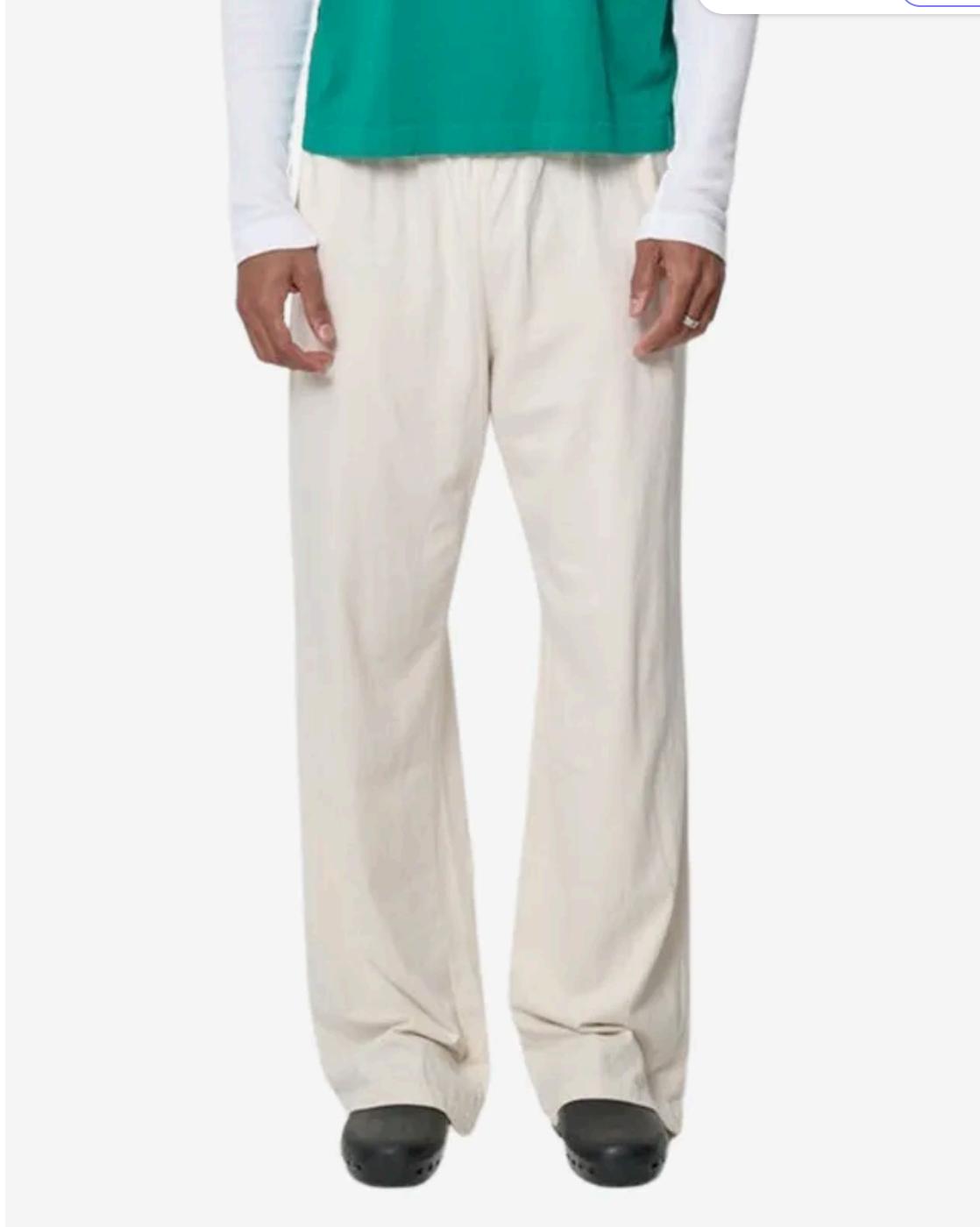
EVERYBODY.WORLD

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**Everybody.World**

Apartment Pants

\$69

EVERYBODY.WORLD

[SHOP EVERYBODY.WORLD](#)

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If you've paid any attention to television, you've no doubt heard of Merz B. Schwanen because of *The Bear*. The German label has been known by the menswear illuminati for next-level T-shirts and sweatshirts which are knit on ultra rare loopwheel knitting machines. On top of that, the label has expanded into a full-fledged menswear brand that's full of closet staples that are as good as its tees.



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Vintage Rib Organic Cotton Sweatshirt

\$190
NORDSTROM



Merz B. Schwanen

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\$290 \$131 (55% OFF)

NORDSTROM

**Merz B. Schwanen**

Organic Cotton Tee

\$70

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**Merz B. Schwanen**

Quarter Zip Organic Cotton Sweatshirt

\$190 NORDSTROM

Skims

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its boxer briefs usurped our long-time favorite undies in a stroke of genius. So we're doing you a favor and upgrade your underwear drawer and add a couple of tees while you're at it.

**Skims****Classic T-Shirt**

\$44

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**Skims**

Relaxed Zip Up Hoodie

\$94
SKIMS

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**Skims**

Relaxed Long Sleeve T-Shirt

\$58 SKIMS

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**Skims**

Boxer Brief

\$18
SKIMS[SHOP SKIMS](#)

The Workday Workhorses

Alex Mill

Alex Mill From boxy striped tees to drawstring chinos to rumpled oxford shirts, everything at Alex Mill has a relaxed ease that's built for 2024. You'll feel less stressed upon contact. Alex Mill's overall aesthetic leans preppy but has a clear love for hardwearing vintage staples like beefy flannel shirts and tough chore coats.

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**Alex Mill**

Garment Dyed Work Jacket in Recycled Denim

\$195 ALEX MILL

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**Alex Mill****Field Pant in Herringbone**

\$175 ALEX MILL

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**Alex Mill**

Mill Shirt in Striped Poplin

\$165 ALEX MILL

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**Alex Mill****James Rollneck in Cotton Linen**

\$195
ALEX MILL

SHOP ALEX MILL

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With the **Bananassaince** in full swing, there's never been a better time to load up on BR's rustic, archive-indebted hits. Stuff your cart with plush cashmere knits, slinky trousers, and luscious suede jackets. (The jeans are a standout, too.)

**Banana Republic**

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\$60

BANANA REPUBLIC

**Banana Republic**

Plaid Shirt Jacket

\$180

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**Banana Republic**

Signature Italian Rustico Suit Jacket

\$450 BANANA REPUBLIC

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**Banana Republic**

Washed Cotton Poplin Shirt

\$70

BANANA REPUBLIC

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There are basics you want to lay on the couch in, and then there's the stuff from COS. In its modern, sophisticated clothes, you'll be motivated to do way more than binge bad TV.

**COS**

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\$350

COS

**COS****Funnel-Neck Merino Wool Zip-Up Cardigan**

\$150

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**COS**

Collared Merino Wool-Yak Blend Half-Zip Sweater

\$170
COS

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**COS**

Relaxed Pleated Cotton Wide-Leg Pants

\$135
COS[SHOP COS](#)

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The latest phoenix to emerge from the ashes of your local mall? Madewell, which recently appointed Luke Linder, an ex-Gap honcho, to revamp its menswear, with a little help from design whiz Aaron Levine, formerly of Club Monaco and Abercrombie, and erstwhile GQ deputy fashion director Jon Tietz. The silhouettes are spot-on, the styling is perfectly executed, and the whole overhaul has us buzzing about what the brand will do next.

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**Madewell**

Pleated Trousers in Italian Cotton Twill

\$148 MADEWELL

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**Madewell**

Waffle-Knit Crewneck Sweater

\$118 MADEWELL

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**Madewell**

Twill Easy Long-Sleeve Shirt

\$118 MADEWELL

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**Madewell****Heavyweight Slub Cotton Tee**

\$50
MADEWELL

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Plenty of brands claim to make hardy menswear designed to “take a beating”. Taylor Stitch actually delivers on the promise, turning out beefy flannels, stellar chore jackets, and dialed-in riffs on classic Americana with just the right amount of rough-around-the-edges appeal.

**Taylor Stitch**

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\$125

TAYLOR STITCH

**Taylor Stitch**

The Maritime Shirt Jacket

\$188

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**Taylor Stitch**

The Upland Jacket

\$218 TAYLOR STITCH

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**Taylor Stitch**

The Shop Shirt

\$168
TAYLOR STITCH

[SHOP TAYLOR STITCH](#)



The Weekend Warriors

Nike

Nike needs no introduction. The biggest clothing company in the world made its name putting athletics first, but the brand's impact in the clothing arena extends far beyond its reputation for record-breaking performance gear. From comfortable tees to plush sneakers and simple sweats, there's a reason the streets on your city are lined with swooshes: Nike is affordable, comfortable, and—don't deny it—makes everyone feel like a bit more of an athlete when they wear it. These are the basics to grab, though you might own them already.

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**Nike****Air Force 1 '07 Sneakers**

\$115

NIKE

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**Nike****Club Knit Joggers**

\$55

NIKE

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**Nike****Club Fleece**\$60
NIKE

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**Nike****Everyday Plush Cushioned Training Crew Socks, 6-Pairs**

\$28

NIKE

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Champion got it very right when it invented its durable, and shrink-proof, reverse weave fabric in the '30s. The brand has been putting out some of the **best hoodies** that we've been wearing since high school and don't intend to stop now.

**Champion**

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\$30 \$16 (47% OFF)

CHAMPION

**Champion**

Powerblend Fleece Joggers

\$45 \$20 (56% OFF)

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**Champion****Reverse Weave Fleece Pullover Hoodie**

\$50 \$40 (20% OFF) CHAMPION

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**Champion**

Powerblend Open Bottom Sweatpants

\$45 \$26 (42% OFF)
CHAMPION

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A *GQ* staffer favorite, Lady White Co.'s tees are made in LA from high-quality ring-spun cotton and come in strangely-hard-to-find colors like sand and rose. FWIW, the sweats and socks also kill.

**Lady White Co.**

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\$250
LADY WHITE CO.

**Lady White Co.****Super Weighted Hoodie**

\$230

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**Lady White Co.**

Our T-Shirt

\$110 LADY WHITE CO.

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**Lady White Co.**

Raglan Thermal

\$160
LADY WHITE CO.

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The Canadian label makes one of our favorite heavy-duty hoodies of all time, but all of their sweats are worthy of your time—whether you're spending it in the gym, on the couch, or anywhere between. With top-shelf fabric, god-tier construction, and impeccable fits, few other brands take loungewear as seriously as Reigning Champ does.

**Reigning Champ**

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\$145

REIGNING CHAMP

**Reigning Champ**

Cotton Chino Sophomore Relaxed Pant

\$125

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**Reigning Champ****Midweight Terry Relaxed Sweatpant**

\$110 REIGNING CHAMP

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**Reigning Champ**

Midweight Terry Relaxed Zip Hoodie

\$135
REIGNING CHAMP

SHOP REIGNING CHAMP

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You can't put together a list of the best basics without Russell Athletic, the literal inventor of the sweatshirt. Its crewnecks and hoodies are as popular—and comfy!—today as they were a century ago.

**Russell Athletic**

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\$26 \$20 (23% OFF)

AMAZON

**Russell Athletic****Dri Power Fleece Open Bottom Sweatpants**

\$21

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**Russell Athletic****Mesh Pocket Short**

\$27 \$15 (44% OFF) AMAZON

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**Russell Athletic**

Cotton Rich 2.0 Premium Fleece Sweatshirt

\$30 \$26 (13% OFF)
AMAZON

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The Reliable Upgrades

Another Aspect

Another Aspect is a Copenhagen-based menswear brand that makes thoughtfully-designed goods with a minimalist bent. From their merino wool knits to their selvedge denim to their organic cotton sweats, the cheerful Danes brand takes special care to imbue their wares with plenty of timeless appeal.

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**Another Aspect****3.0 Organic Cotton Shirt**

\$195 FARFETCH

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**Another Aspect**

Another Polo Shirt 2.0

\$207 FARFETCH

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**Another Aspect**

3.0 Cardigan

\$332
FARFETCH

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**Another Aspect****2.0 Straight-Leg Jeans**

\$264
FARFETCH

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Los Angeles brand Buck Mason made our [best white T-shirts](#), [best black T-shirts](#), and [Best Colorful T-Shirts](#) lists. There's a cut, weight, and price point trifecta happening here that is simply magic—and ever since the label expanded its remit to include a full line of menswear, its tees might be the *least* exciting thing it has going on.

**Buck Mason**

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\$298
BUCK MASON**Buck Mason**

Toughknit Classic Tee

\$55

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**Buck Mason**

Welterweight Hooded Sweatshirt

\$148 BUCK MASON

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**Buck Mason**

Toughknit Thermal L/S Crew

\$128
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Premium fabrics and grade-A construction are standard at Knickerbocker, which trades in classic designs inspired by vintage workwear. Don't miss their impeccable knits and camp shirts.

**Knickerbocker**

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\$265

KNICKERBOCKER

**Knickerbocker**

Staff Chino Twill Pant

\$225 \$135 (40% OFF)

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**Knickerbocker****Raglan Mock Neck Thermal**

\$135 \$95 (30% OFF) KNICKERBOCKER

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**Knickerbocker****"Beefy" Cotton Oxford**

\$195 \$120 (38% OFF)
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Sid Mashburn's been a beacon of casual American tailoring that few labels even come close to touching. From high-quality button-ups to impeccable suits and blazers, Mashburn's the place to get your dressier staples locked down.

**Sid Mashburn**

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\$1,495
MR PORTER**Sid Mashburn**

Cotton-Chambray Western Shirt

\$195

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**Sid Mashburn****Straight-Leg Garment-Dyed Cotton-Twill Trousers**

\$195 MR PORTER

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**Sid Mashburn**

Suede Bomber Jacket

\$1,500 MR PORTER

Beams Plus

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price point and even better quality. But it's also a great bridge

with its offbeat renditions on Americana classics and wild collaborations.

**Beams Plus****Mohair-Blend Sweater**

\$485

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**Beams Plus****Straight-Leg Jeans**

\$220 MR. PORTER

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**Beams Plus****Button-Down Collar Checked Cotton-Flannel Shirt**

\$225 MR PORTER

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Gerald Ortiz is a style commerce writer for GQ covering fashion, grooming, and occasionally lifestyle. Previously, he was the style writer for Gear Patrol and the managing editor at Heddels. He graduated from the University of California, Davis with three degrees, none of which directly relate to fashion (so it ... [Read More](#)

Style Commerce Writer

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75 Timeless, GQ-Approved Wardrobe Staples Every Guy Should Own

By Yang-Yi Goh and Avidan Grossman

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Every Piece of Menswear You Should Own in 2025

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Celebrities

John C. Reilly Breaks Down His Most Iconic Characters

