

THE ART OF

# MANLINESS

Classic Skills and Manners  
for the Modern Man



Brett and Kate McKay



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## About the Authors

Brett McKay is a man. Kate McKay loves manly men. Together this husband and wife team reside in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and run the [ArtofManliness.com](http://ArtofManliness.com), the manliest website on the Internet.



William Hurst and George Novak

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## **Dedication**

To William Hurst and George Novak, members of the Greatest Generation and men who truly lived  
the art of manliness.

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“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

—Theodore Roosevelt





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# Introduction

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“He is going to be known as a sort of boys’ hero. He is going to be known preeminently for his manliness. There is going to be a Roosevelt legend.”

“I have grieved most deeply at the death of your noble son. I have watched his conduct from the commencement of the war, and have pointed with pride to the patriotism, self-denial, and manliness of character he has exhibited.”

“After all, the greatest of Washington’s qualities was a rugged manliness which gave him the respect and confidence even of his enemies.”

The quotes above are taken from nineteenth-century writings, and show the use of the word manliness in a way quite foreign to the modern reader: as a great compliment. In times past, manliness was a worthy and distinct characteristic, like intelligence, bravery and humor. It was a quality that boys strived to attain and men wished to have attached to their name.

A man who had mastered the art of manliness embodied many, if not all, of these manly characteristics:

- Looks out for and is loyal to his friends and family.
- Does the right thing, even when it’s not convenient.
- Is proficient in the manly arts.
- Treats women with respect and honor.
- Serves and gives back to his community.
- Sacrifices for the good of others.
- Works hard and seldom complains.
- Exhibits both great courage and tender compassion.
- Has a confident swagger but isn’t a pompous jerk.
- Is witty without succumbing to sarcasm.
- Embraces instead of shirks responsibility.

You probably have grandfathers who exemplify this kind of honorable manliness. But something happened in the last fifty years to cause these positive manly virtues and skills to disappear from the current generations of men. Fathers have ceased passing on the art of manliness to their sons, and our culture, nervous to assign any single set of virtues to one sex, has stripped the meaning of manliness of anything laudatory.

Discouraged from celebrating the positive aspects of manliness, society today focuses only on the stereotypical and negative aspects of manhood. Sadly manliness has come to be associated with the

dithering dads of television sitcoms and commercials, the shallow action dudes of cinema who live blow stuff up and the meatheads of men's magazines who covet six-pack abs above all else.

Our goal with this book is to hopefully encourage a new generation of men to pick up where the grandfathers left off in the history and legacy of manliness. Many people have argued that we need reinvent what manliness means in the twenty-first century. Usually this means stripping manliness of its masculinity and replacing it with more sensitive feminine qualities. We argue that manliness doesn't need to be reinvented.

The art of manliness just needs to be rediscovered.

While no book could ever fully cover all the positive qualities and essential skills every man should possess, we hope this book can at least get men started down the path of rediscovering the lost art of manliness. We've divided the book into several sections reflecting the different roles a man assumes throughout his life. Within each section we discuss a sampling of the attributes and skills that many men today have never learned. You can read the book straight through or you can skip to parts that you find more interesting or pertinent to your own life.

Don't let this book be the end of your journey to rediscover the lost art of manliness; it should only be the beginning. Thousands of men before us have left behind nuggets of wisdom that describe what it means to be a man. And if you look hard enough, you can find men in your own life who can teach you the important skills and qualities of true manhood. Seek out great men, both past and present, and in time you'll become a virtuoso of the art of manliness.

**Note to readers: Not only have many of the skills of the men of yesteryear been lost over time, so has a great deal of the colorful language that was once spoken in the streets and saloons of nineteenth-century cities. We've given the pages of this book a small sprinkle (a good deal) of these old-time phrases and expressions. (They are indicated by small caps throughout the book.) So if you come across a word that sounds like something your great-great-great grandpa might have said, it probably is. In [Appendix B. Glossary of Manly Nineteenth-Century Vernacular](#), you'll find a glossary with these nineteenth-century slang words and their definitions.**

**Also, because the oft-used "douche bag" is getting as old as "bling bling," we've peppered the pages of this book with unique insults from our manliest president, Theodore Roosevelt. TR was master of the creative, yet cutting, put-down. These are all denoted by small caps. To freshen up your insult repertoire, go to [Appendix C. Words of Wisdom](#) for a full list of TR's humdingers.**

# Chapter One. The Gentleman

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“This is the final test of a gentleman: his respect for those who can be of no possible service to him.”

—William Lyon Phelps

For centuries, well-bred men were trained in all the manly arts, from the skills needed to be a soldier to the proper etiquette for dinner parties. They were quintessential gentlemen—dapper in dress, polished in conduct, yet every bit a true man. Unfortunately, many modern men place the gentleman on the sissy end of the manliness spectrum, opposite that of the burping, unshaven, uncouth, “man’s man.” Yet our forebears understood that there was no contradiction in being ruggedly manly and a refined gentleman. George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt and Robert E. Lee are some examples of men who combined gritty manliness with gentlemanly bearing. They paid attention to how they dressed, groomed and conducted themselves and were as comfortable at a stately ball as they were on the battlefield. And the desire to be a gentleman was not restricted to the rich or powerful either; Emily Post’s *Etiquette* was the most requested book by G.I.s during World War II.

Unfortunately, not enough men today have taken the time to cultivate both the hearty and the refined sides of their manly character. It sometimes seems the gentleman is a dying breed. Common decency and respectful etiquette have been replaced with unrepentant rudeness. Today’s men walk around ungroomed in wrinkled and ill-fitted clothing and often have little regard for how their behavior affects others.

But it doesn’t have to be this way.

Being a gentleman is more than following a bunch of dos and don’ts. It’s about having a profound respect for yourself and for others. By following the simple tips contained in this chapter, any ruffian can turn into a proper gentleman. Developing the traits of a gentleman is a key to success in a



aspects of your life. Business associates will respect you; friends will flock to you; women will adore you.

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## Dress like a Gentleman

“The difference between a man of sense and a fop is that the fop values himself upon his dress; and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time he knows he must not neglect it.”

—Lord Chesterfield

Judging a book by its cover may not be desirable, but it's initially the only evidence we have at our disposal. Within seconds of meeting you, people make judgments and decisions based on your appearance. What are your clothes telling them? That you're a disciplined, thoughtful guy with an eye for detail? Or that you're just sliding by in life?

Appearance matters. Dressing like a gentleman will boost your own confidence and win you the respect of others. Whether you're applying for a job or taking a lady out on the town, putting your best foot forward will maximize your chances for success. Especially if that foot is covered by a well-shined shoe.

## Getting Fitted for a Suit

“Like every good man, I strive for perfection, and, like every ordinary man, I have found that perfection is out of reach—but not the perfect suit.”

—Edward Tivnan

There's no manlier outfit than a well-tailored suit. The reason they look so darn manly is that they originated from military uniforms. Every man should have at least one good suit that he can wear to job interviews, weddings and a special night on the town. But picking out a suit is not like picking out a T-shirt and a pair of jeans. If you want to look and feel good in your suit, you need to take into account several factors. Below, we've provided some things to keep in mind when you walk into a haberdashery to get fitted for a new suit. Follow them, and you'll leave the store with a long-lasting and dashing handsome suit.

### *The Jacket: Getting the Perfect Fit*

**Fit the shoulder.** The most important area you want to check for fit is in the shoulder or yoke area of the jacket. While you can alter a suit that doesn't fit in the shoulder, it's much more difficult than other areas of the jacket and will thus cost more. You don't want the fabric in the shoulder to be so tight that it starts to bunch up. The shoulder and upper back area should lie flat along your body.

**Make sure the armholes are comfortable.** When you lay your arms down at your side, it shouldn't feel like the armholes are digging their way into your armpits. If you can't put your arms down, you

definitely have a problem. You don't want to be Randy in *A Christmas Story*, looking like a tick reared to pop. Again, while the armholes can be altered, it's much more difficult and will cost you a lot of money.

**Figure 1.1** The most important area you want to check for fit is in the shoulder or yoke area of the jacket.



**Check how the jacket drapes on your body.** The suit should drape comfortably and freely on the front of your body. It shouldn't drape so much that you look like a twelve-year-old borrowing your dad's suit. The lapels should lay flat on your chest. If they're not, it's too small. Finally, check the back. If the jacket has vents, then the vents should lay flat on your butt, i.e., your butt shouldn't be sticking out. If it is, you need to have the jacket altered so it fits larger around your front.

**Check the length of the jacket.** The key here is to find balance. You don't want the jacket to be too long or too short. Your grandpa's tailor used to check for the proper length of the jacket by having him lay his arms at his side and cup his fingers. The jacket was fitted to where it met the inner curve of Grandpa's fingers. The modern rule of thumb is that the jacket should be long enough to completely cover your butt, but no longer.

**Check the length of the sleeve.** Sleeves should generally be long enough to show just a quarter length of shirtsleeve when you lay your arms flat at your side. You don't want the sleeve to break past your wrist. That's nerdy.

### ***Pants: Where Should the Trouser Break?***

Wear your pants on your waist, not your hips. We're talking about your real waist here. For the past twenty years men have been wearing their pants lower and lower around their hips. While this may be fine for jeans, wearing your pants very low does not work for trousers. A man should wear trousers at navel level, not below it.

When your tailor is talking about "the break in your trouser," he's talking about the point where your pant's hem falls on your shoes. If your break is too high, you'll look like Steve Urkel. If it's too

low, your pants will swallow your **dew beaters**. You have three options for where the break is on your pant: the full break, the medium break and the no break.

**Figure 1.2** You have three options for where the break is on your pant. From top to bottom: the full break, the medium break and the no break.

**The full break:** The bottom of the hem covers the heel of the shoe. This option provides a much longer covering, keeping the pants from exposing one's socks when walking.



**The medium break:** The bottom of the hem falls in the middle of the heel of the shoe. It provides less covering for the sock when walking but keeps the fabric further away from the floor and reduces the chance of tripping.



**The no break:** The bottom of the hem falls almost at the top of the heel of the shoe. When being measured for a no break hem, make sure the tailor doesn't go too high or you'll show too much sock.



## How to Rock a Pocket Square

What do Winston Churchill, Cary Grant, and James Bond have in common? In addition to enjoying a stiff drink, they all rocked a pocket square. Like the hat, the popularity of pocket squares waxes and wanes, and for too long men were neglecting the breast pockets of their suits.

But the pocket square is currently enjoying a renaissance, popping up on the movers and shakers of Hollywood and hip hop. Hell, even Saddam Hussein rocked a pocket square when he was on trial—no man should never defend his war crimes without one.

The pocket square is back with good reason; they are an easy and inexpensive way to vary the look of the same suit. Pocket squares add some visual interest and flair to your appearance. Every man just looks more dapper with a bit of fabric peeking out his pocket.

### *Pocket Square Guidelines*

**Don't leave your suit naked.** A suit without a pocket square lacks finished panache. So the first guideline of pocket square usage is to always wear one when you wear a suit or sport coat. It just looks better.

**Color coordinating.** A pocket square can be patterned or solid. The general guideline is that your pocket square color should complement some color on your tie. So if your tie has a bit of red, rock a solid red pocket square or a patterned pocket square with some red in it. However, avoid matching the colors exactly. It looks like you're trying too hard (so never ever buy a tie/pocket square set at your local department store). A white pocket square can be worn with any color tie, making the white handkerchief an essential part of every man's collection.

### *How to Fold a Pocket Square*

You have several options on how to fold your pocket square. Some are quite simple and others are complex. It all comes down to personal taste. Here are three simple folds that every man should



master.

**Figure 1.3** Here are three simple folds that every man should master. From top to bottom: the straight fold, the one corner fold and the puff fold.



#### *The Straight Fold*

The straight fold lends a classic look to your suit. What you'll end up with is a small rectangle peeking out of your breast pocket. Here's one way to fold it:

1. Lay your pocket square flat.
2. Bring the left side to the right side
3. Bring the bottom towards the top, but don't fold it all the way.
4. Fold the fabric in thirds horizontally so that it will fit your suit pocket.

#### *The One Corner Fold*

With the one corner fold, you'll have a small peak of fabric coming out your pocket. This one is my favorite of the three. Here's how to fold it:

1. Lay your pocket square on a flat surface with one corner facing up and one corner facing down so that it looks like you have a baseball diamond in front of you.

2. Bring the bottom point to the top point so that you create a triangle.
3. Bring the left corner of the triangle to the right corner, and the right corner to the left corner. You should end up with a long rectangle with a point at the top. It looks sort of like a fence slat.
4. Fold the bottom toward the top, but not all the way.
5. Place it in your suit. Adjust until you get the desired amount of point coming out of the pocket.

### *The Puff Fold*

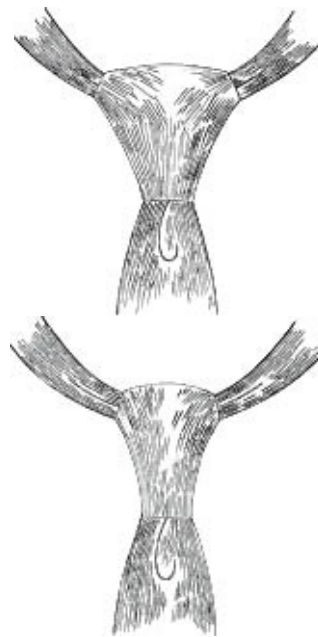
The puff “fold” is the simplest of the folds, as there’s no actual folding involved. The result is a small puff of fabric coming out of your suit pocket. Here’s how to do it.

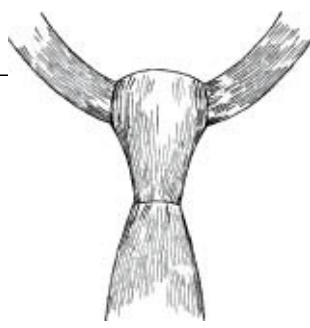
1. Lay the pocket square flat.
2. Pinch the middle of the fabric, allowing the folds to come in naturally.
3. With one hand firmly holding the pocket square, use your other hand to gently gather it together.
4. Now gracefully gather up the bottom of the pocket square.
5. Place it in your suit. Fiddle with it until you get the desired puffiness.

## **Three Ways to Tie a Tie**

It’s a sad fact, but there are grown men who don’t know how to tie a necktie. If they have a big interview that afternoon, they’ll go shopping for a clip-on. Even if a man does know how to tie a tie, their knowledge is often limited to just one knot. But there are several ways to tie a necktie. Certain knots should be used with certain shirt collars and tie fabric materials to get the best results for your appearance. Below, we show you three classic necktie knots every man should know and give you the lowdown on when you should use them.

**Figure 1.4** Here are three classic necktie knots every man should know. From top to bottom: the Windsor knot, the half Windsor knot and the four-in-hand knot.





### ***The Windsor Knot***

The Windsor knot gives you a wide triangular knot that's good for more formal settings. This knot is best worn with a wide spread collar.

1. Drape the tie around your neck. The wide end should extend about 12 inches below the narrow end of the tie. Cross the wide part of the tie over the narrow end.
2. Bring the wide end of the tie up through the hole between your collar and the tie. Then pull it down toward the front.
3. Bring the wide end behind the narrow end and to the right.
4. Pull the wide end back through the loop again. You should have a triangle now where the knot will be.
5. Wrap the wide end around the triangle by pulling the wide end from right to left.
6. Bring the wide end up through the loop a third time.
7. Pull the wide end through the knot in front.
8. Tighten the knot and center it with both hands.

### ***The Half Windsor Knot***

This is the Windsor knot's little brother. Like the Windsor, you're left with a symmetrical triangular knot, but the Half Windsor is not as large. This knot is appropriate for lighter fabrics and wider tie collars. It's best worn with a standard collar.

1. Drape the tie around your neck. The wide end should extend about 12 inches below the narrow end of the tie. Cross the wide part of the tie over the narrow end.
2. Bring the wide end around and behind the narrow end.
3. Bring the wide end up and pull it down through the hole between your collar and tie.
4. Bring the wide end around the front, over the narrow end from right to left.
5. Bring the wide end up back through the loop again.
6. Pull the wide end down through the knot in front.
7. Tighten the knot and center it with both hands.

### ***The Four-In-Hand Knot***

Also known as the "schoolboy," this is probably the most widely used knot because it's so easy to tie. It's a good knot to use if your tie is made of heavier material. It looks best with smaller spread collars.

1. Drape the tie around your neck. The wide end should extend about 12 inches below the narrow end of the tie. Cross the wide part of the tie over the narrow end.
2. Turn the wide end back underneath the narrow end.
3. Continue wrapping the wide end around the narrow end by bringing it across the front of the narrow end again.
4. Pull the wide end up and through the back of the loop.
5. Hold the front of the knot with your index finger and bring the wide end down through the front of the knot.
6. Tighten the knot carefully to the **gills** by holding the narrow end and sliding the knot up. Center the knot.

## **Bringing Back the Hat**

And now for the ultimate finishing touch for any gentleman's outfit: the hat.

Up until the 1950s, men were rarely seen out and about without a hat sitting upon their heads. Since that time, the wearing of hats has seen a precipitous decline. No one is sure why. Some say the downfall of hats occurred when JFK did not wear a hat to his inauguration, thus forever branding the president as uncool. This is an urban myth, however, as Kennedy did indeed don a hat that day. Another theory posits that the shrinking size of cars made wearing a hat while driving prohibitively difficult. Most likely, the demise of hats can simply be traced to changing styles and the ongoing trend toward a more casual look.

Yet hats are due for a full resurgence. Hats are both functional and stylish. They can hide a bad hair day, cover a bald spot, keep your head warm and shade your eyes from the sun. Hats supply a touch of class and sophistication, impart personality and add an interesting and unique accent to your outfit. And hats are a surefire way to boost your confidence. A cool hat can quickly become your signature piece and give you extra swagger.

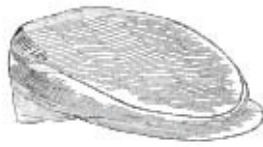
## ***The Different Kinds of Hats***

Of course men today still wear hats, but they are most often confined to ratty baseball caps, hippie beanie caps or the thankfully almost extinct trucker hat. There is nothing wrong with these kinds of headpieces per se, but there are other hat options out there. So mix up your lids with the following options.

### ***The Flat Cap***

The flat cap has a rounded shape, a small brim and a high back. Long associated with working-class men in the UK, the flat cap can be a stylish way to add interest to a casual outfit. They can give your tired jeans and T-shirt look unique style. Choose the more masculine flat cap over the similar, but rounder and puffier, newsboy cap. The latter has been almost entirely co-opted by the ladies.





**Figure 1.5 The flat cap.**

### *The Fedora*

Fedoras were once considered de rigueur for men going out in public, whether they were headed to work or a ballgame. While once mainstream, a man in a fedora is now seen as a trendsetter. Fedoras are soft and usually made of felt, creased lengthwise down the crown and pinched on both sides. Fedoras will make you look manly and a bit mysterious. Worn by Prohibition-era gangsters, almost all of the movie stars of the 1940s and Old Blue Eyes himself, donning a fedora puts you in touch with a truly suave and manly heritage.



**Figure 1.6 The fedora.**

### *The Porkpie*

Named for its resemblance to an actual pork pie, this hat is similar to a fedora but with a flat top instead of a pinched crown. The brim is also shorter and turned up. The hat is often associated with the jazz, blues and ska culture, but was also worn by the likes of Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb.



**Figure 1.7 The porkpie.**

### *The Homburg*

The homburg is another hat similar to the fedora. The homburg's brim lacks the fedora's pinches and is turned up all the way around. The hat is accented with a hatband into which a feather may be stuck. Less casual than a top hat and dressier than a fedora, the homburg was the go-to lid for politicians and diplomats in the twentieth century. Favored by the Godfather and resurrected by the likes of Snoc Dogg and Tupac, the homburg now carries a distinctly gangster flavor.



**Figure 1.8 The homburg.**

### *The Bowler/Derby*

Bowlers are hard, made of felt and have very short brims. While considered a British icon, the bowler

was also part of the urban culture of America in the nineteenth century. For example, one of the gangs that roamed the mean streets of New York City around this time was the Plug Uglies. The Uglies were never without their bowler hats, which they wore both as their signature piece and to protect their heads during their many scuffles with rival gangs.



**Figure 1.9** The bowler/derby.

### *Trilby*

If the bowler is largely known as a British hat, the trilby is distinctively American. Trilbies, with their deeply indented crown and narrow brim, share similarities with the homburg and fedora but have a style all their own. Although traditionally associated with the jazz culture and paired with dressier outfits, today a checkered or tweed trilby is often worn to top off a more casual outfit.



**Figure 1.10** The trilby.

## ***Wear a Hat With Confidence***

**“Cock your hat—angles are attitudes.”**

—Frank Sinatra

Hats can give you a feeling of effortless cool and manly confidence. Few people loved hats more, wore them better than Frank Sinatra. He was constantly playing with the idea of angling and tilting his hat to convey different attitudes. Here’s how you can wear your hat to reflect your mood:

- Wear your hat pushed back to seem more open and accessible.
- Tilt your hat over your eyes to seem mysterious and intimidating.
- Tilt your hat up 1 inch from completely straight to project an all-business attitude.

## ***Hat Etiquette***

The hat is a singular accessory; when and where you don it, doff it and tip it conveys respect in a way no other piece of clothing can. In adopting the hat as your signature piece, you must also accept the responsibilities that go with it. Often ignored, hat etiquette will show that your uniqueness extends not only to your choice of headwear but to your manners as well.

Hats should always be removed:

- At funerals and graveside services
- Inside Christian churches
- During outdoor weddings
- Inside of homes, restaurants and buildings (unless in the corridors or lobbies of the latter)
- When riding an elevator in the presence of a lady

**Figure 1.11 Hats should always be removed when riding in an elevator in the presence of a lady.**



- During the national anthem
- While eating meals (unless seated at the lunch counter of a diner)
- While conversing with someone

Tip your hat when:

- Greeting a friend (when greeting a lady friend, remove your hat completely by the crown)
- Excusing yourself to a woman whom you have inadvertently jostled or are passing by in a tight space
- Saying good-bye
- Expressing gratitude (“thank you” and “you’re welcome”)

### ***The Perfect Hat for Your Ugly Mug***

What we find attractive is largely based on symmetry. The more symmetrical a face is, the more appealing it appears to others. But there’s not much we can do, short of surgery, to change the symmetry of our faces. There are ways to mitigate our asymmetries, however. You may have heard a woman in your life talk about getting a haircut that flatters her particular face shape. While different haircuts don’t come in enough varieties to have the same effect, there is another way guys can balance out their faces: hats. All hats make a man look more dapper. But picking a hat that is right for your face shape will increase your attractiveness and give you an even sharper appearance. If you’ve been inspired to bring back the hat, but weren’t sure what kind of hat to get, this guide will help you pick

the right hat for your ugly mug.

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### *Anatomy of a Hat*

Before we get started, let's do a quick rundown of some of the terms we'll be using to fit a hat to your mug.

“Taper” describes how narrow the top of the crown is compared to the bottom. Here's an example of a hat that tapers. (figure 1.12)

Notice how it gets narrower near the top of the crown.

Here's a hat that has no taper (figure 1.13). Notice how the crown doesn't narrow as it gets to the top.



**Figure 1.12** A hat that tapers gets narrower near the top of the crown.



**Figure 1.13** A hat that has no taper doesn't get narrower at the top of the crown.

Now let's match a hat to that ugly mug of yours:

**Short Full Face.** Your face is shaped like: Jack Black. A round face tends to look short, so you want a hat that will give you a little height.

- Crown: Medium height and size
- Taper: Slight
- Hat Band: Narrow band of a contrasting color will add height
- Brim: Moderate width. Snap the brim to its full width and turn it up. Never snap it down or it will make your face appear shorter.
- Tilt: Back from face; tilting it over your face will make the face appear shorter.
- Recommended Hats: fedora, gambler, panama

**Long Thin Face.** Your face is shaped like: Will Arnett. Look for a hat that shortens the appearance of your face.

- Crown: Shorter height. Avoid crowns that are square, full or too high.
- Taper: Moderate
- Hat Band: Wide (will make your face shorter) with a contrasting color to break up your vertical lines

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