

80/20 Principle

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The “Pareto Principle” is an economics theory stating that, for the majority of events, roughly 80% of the result comes from 20% of the effort.

It holds true in a surprising number of situations — especially considering that there’s nothing mathematically significant about the 80% benchmark, suggesting that the trend stems from an innately human usage of resources rather than a natural force.

Businesses like to keep an eye on 80% trends because it gives them a good way to improve the important aspects of their business while trimming or automating the low-profit aspects: if 80% of a store’s sales are coming from 20% of the customers, advertising and promotional programs should be focused on bringing that 20% back in rather than increasing the number of people coming in the store overall, and so on.



But for you, the Pareto principle is useful because it explains how we’re going to approach style in this course. We are going to “knowingly” ignore 80% of the information and focus on the 20% of information & actions which will yield 80% of the results.

The 20% That Gets Results

A big portion of personal style is just that — personal. It’s incorporating particular cuts that appeal to your tastes and wants. And while these details are important to “finishing” your style, they’re rarely the actual difference between looking good and looking bad. There are, after all, thousands of ways to look good.

However — if you fail to nail these three aspects of style you will have a problem. So read them — know them — and understand them.

And don’t worry — we’ll talk about them a lot more throughout the course.

Fit: The Ultimate Return on Investment

For small changes that get huge returns, you can’t do better than getting a good fit in your clothing.

Fit is the invisible backbone propping up all your other style choices. A fantastic color and pattern don't matter if the shape of your body is unappealing. Bad fit makes you look slumped, lumpy, or misshapen, and is usually uncomfortable beside.

Clothes that lie close to the body without pinching it are clothes that look natural, streamlined, and just plain good. Spending an extra \$50 on



The difference that fit makes.

adjustments is money that gives you an immediate and permanent benefit — definitely part of that all-important 20% of the changes you can make.



Quality Material: The Value Factor

Tailors price their custom clothing based on the cloth used before they take any other factors into account. There's a good reason for this: quality fabric makes a big difference, and it costs accordingly more. Good fabrics also last longer, so by spending a bit more up front you're getting a garment that could last twice as long as one made from cheaper fabric — a savings over time that's tough to beat. The color and pattern you select are second to the physical material itself. They're very *obvious* factors, but they're ones that can be applied to any outfit for roughly the same cost.

The same for leathers – the best shoe makers and leather luggage makers use only the finest leathers. And although top grain leather does not 100% ensure quality build, it's hard to find a leather worker who would waste his best material on a design that wouldn't reward him with a satisfied client.

My point is to always look for quality material first – it is a strong indicator that the hidden build factors within the garment/accessory are as flawless as the material chosen to craft the piece.



Can you spot the detail that makes this jacket dated?

Style Basics: Knowing Your Piece is Timeless

For the most part you don't need to be focusing on designer brands, expensive design, or other style-related expenses. But it is worth working with either a salesperson or a tailor who actually knows the details of men's clothing to be sure that you're not buying something that just doesn't work.

A very formal charcoal business suit with pocket flaps and a ticket pocket, for example, would be an oddity in most business settings. It's not that it would be *wrong* to wear — necessarily — but unless you're already a man with a reputation for stylistic experiments it will make you look like someone who doesn't really know what he's doing.

Since a lot of ready-to-wear menswear these days plays fast and loose with classic styles, it's worth shopping somewhere that people can be trusted to avoid the basic mistakes automatically. That's a small change with a big potential return.

The 80% That's Less Important

If you're spending more than a couple minutes thinking about the small stuff you're not using your time wisely.

The truth is the time we spend on needless minute details is a trick we play on ourselves so we don't have to make real change.

If you're a man who's working on improving his wardrobe, always be asking — are you thinking about the 20% that gives you the 80% return? Or are you spinning your wheels fretting about the 80% of your choices that don't make much of an impact in the end?

Examples:

- Did I wear this same set of clothing last week? **If what you're wearing feels good, is clean, and suits the occasion move forward with confidence!**
- Using the right necktie knot for your collar type? **Just tie the knot and arrive to that interview 15 minutes early vs. fretting over something you're not going to get perfect.**
- What type of pocket square to wear? **Default to a white square fold, stuff the pocket, and receive compliments vs. doing nothing.**
- Dark brown or oxblood for your 2nd pair of dress shoes? **Look at both pair in person – you'll like one better – buy immediately and stop second guessing yourself because of what they are saying on Style Forum.**
- Navy or Charcoal For My First Suit? **Better to have one that looks great and is available WHEN you need it.**
- My only suit is black – but I've heard I should have bought a charcoal grey and now I don't want to spend \$75 to get it tailored. What can I do? **You spent \$500 on this suit last year – it's not the perfect color for you, but it will do till you have more resources and you need to have a suit NOW. Get it tailored and save your money till you can upgrade.**
- A white or light blue dress shirt for the presentation? **Grab both and flip a coin. The winner is your spare because you know you always spill coffee on your shirt in the mornings.**

The Pareto principle has been a valuable business tool for decades. Now it's your tool, too. Use it!