

Shmanners 188: Neckwear

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Travis: Why was the neckwear salesman late to the party?

Teresa: I don't know, why?

Travis: He was all tied up!

Teresa: [deadpan] It's Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: That was a good joke.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Listen, I'm not saying it was a great joke. It's not... in the grand scheme of things, it is not not a groaner. It is. But if you're looking at just the simple construction, and the payoff, the neckwear salesman was all tied up. That—that, to me, is funny. And y'know what? And y'know what? I'm just a professional comic person. What do I know?

Teresa: [laughs] Just 'cause you get paid for it doesn't make you a professional.

Travis: That is—that is actually the exact definition! That is exactly what that means!

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: I am a professional comedy person who makes comedy professionally, and I am saying, the neckwear salesman was all tied up...

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Is a good joke.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Hash tag good joke.

Teresa: [laughing] Hash tag dad joke.

Travis: No, I said good joke! Not dad joke! Though it is a dad joke, because I, technically a dad, made it. Hello, and this is Shmanners. You probably figured that out already.

Teresa: I think we've said it a few times.

Travis: Um, this—so, we have kind of an unofficial series. Maybe it's official at this point, that's kind of an accessories series.

Teresa: Indeed.

Travis: What you've come to learn... I think we did an episode on like, fans.

Teresa: Gloves.

Travis: Gloves, yeah. Stuff like that.

Teresa: Hats.

Travis: And what you've come to learn is, there's a lot of procedure. Procedural etiquette when it comes to these, right? And listen – ties are no exception. And right now, we're talking about all kinds of neckwear. Ties, neckties, bowties...

Teresa: Bolo ties.

Travis: Bolo ties. Um, ascots. Uh, cravats.

Teresa: Indeed. I'll even get into ruffs, and uh, and starched collars.

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: And Beau Brummell and all that business.

Travis: Oh, Beau Brummell. Ugh. Beau Brummell.

Teresa: [laughs] I remember when we did the episode about Beau Brummell, you were very excited. And now you 'ugh.'

Travis: Yes. Can I tell you why?

Teresa: Why?

Travis: Well, so, when we did the first episode about him, it was like, oh, he was, y'know, a dandy, and he was at the forefront of men's fashion at the time, which, cool. But then, we later talked about Beau Brummell being the reason that like, basically, men started dressing more plain. By which I mean, Beau Brummell was all about like, simple color—like, y'know, blacks and grays and brown colors, and like, no flashy accessories. It was about like, clean lines, and...

Teresa: He turned out to be more minimalistic than you had hoped.

Travis: Right! Yes! I thought he was gonna be much more like the King of Dudes that we covered. Evander... Hol... not Holyfield. That's a different guy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Evander Wall, the King of Dudes. Right? But instead, Beau Brummell was more like, fashionable because he made fashion for dudes simpler and more boring.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Ugh.

Teresa: So let's talk about—

Travis: Ugh. Beau Brummell.

Teresa: Let's talk about neckwear.

Travis: More like Beau Boring. What?

Teresa: Let's talk about neckwear.

Travis: Okay, let's—and listen. This is another one of those episodes where we are probably going to, as we talk about the history of it, refer a lot to it as like, "men's fashion." But listen – neckwear, ties, bowties, bolo ties, cravats, ascots, ruffs... anybody could wear this.

Teresa: And it's not a new thing. Um, the idea of "menswear" being worn by women has happened throughout history. It's mostly just because everybody was like, "Oh, well, that's just so and so. That's what they wear." And...

Travis: Yeah. This is a reminder – I was thinking about this last night in preparation.

Teresa: What's that new movie? That movie with the lady? And the family that wears menswear?

Travis: Uhh, Mr. Norrington or something like that? Is that the one you're talking about? With—I think Glenn Close is in it, maybe? I don't know.

Teresa: I don't remember.

Travis: Hey, please tweet @ShmannersCast and let us know, from the clue...

Teresa: She's a writer. She—and she like—

Travis: Oh, Gentleman Jack?

Teresa: Yeahhh!

Travis: I can't believe I got there.

Teresa: I can't believe you did either! You're amazing!

Travis: Okay. Thank you. I just know your brain.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, but yeah, so I was actually thinking about this last night, right? I think neckwear falls into the category of, we think of it as a “masculine” thing now, because of advertising that basically started either in the late 1800s or the early 1900s of like, alright, listen, we gotta start sellin' stuff to dudes and sellin' stuff to ladies. So we need to separate them so we have a... like, that's what it is. It's all advertisement, and not a pre-prescribed thing.

Teresa: It's all about the money.

Travis: It's all about the money.

Teresa: Okay. So, here is a brief history. Probably the necktie originated as a military garment. Um, so, when the Terracotta Warriors were uncovered in 1974 in Xi'an, China—

Travis: They all had bowties on.

Teresa: —it was discovered that each and every statue wore a wrapped neck cloth. Um, so, it was kind of ascot-like.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And y'know, these statues were created in 210 BCE, so like, it's the earliest known example of the modern necktie.

Travis: Of some kind of formalized, uniformly done neckwear.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: 'Cause I'm sure there were like, scarves and wraps and stuff before then. But this seems—

Teresa: Sure. I mean, to keep warm, obviously. And when we talked about gloves, we talked about the uses of gloves. To keep one's hands from getting the outside onto them. Whether it's cold or dirt or whatever.

Travis: Well put, by the way. Gloves keep the outside from getting on your hands. I like that.

Teresa: [laughs] Um, and so...

Travis: We've been doing a lot of practice lately where Bebe will ask questions about why. Y'know, she's three. Why why why.

Teresa: Why why why.

Travis: And we get really good at like, okay. [laughs] You want a concrete answer? Alright. You put gloves on your hands to keep the outside from getting on them. Argue with that, child.

Teresa: [laughing] So, then, the next example of a depiction of a necktie was in Rome. Emperor Trajan was depicted in a column in Rome, and it paid homage to his military genius, and several soldiers, along with the column, are depicted wearing various kinds of neckwear. So it didn't seem to be as much, uh, military issue, but it did seem to denote rank. Because both of these sculptures with the neckwear on them, there is no record of laypeople – people not with military career – wearing neckwear.

Travis: Well, and this tracks a lot, right? Because there's a lot of things like this, some that we've discussed, where because there were these societies where the military was so front and center as far as culture was concerned, it wasn't just something that like, was off in the distance. You saw the military every day. That military often influenced culture, where it's like... we talked about that with like, facial hair, right?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Of like, mustaches and beards being a thing that like, started because the military—like, there were soldiers coming home wearing mustaches and beards, and people thought like, "What a cool look!" Right?

Teresa: Sure, yeah. I mean, it's... a lot of things are influenced by the military out of necessity, and a lot of that stuff—

Travis: Watches was one, right?

Teresa: Yep.

Travis: Where you had to get it on your wrist.

Teresa: Went through it with watches, too.

Travis: Yeah. Yup.

Teresa: Um, so then, the next depiction goes all the way up to the 1630s in the 30 Years War, where Croatia presented soldiers to Louis the... oh no.

Travis: How many—okay, what letters are there?

Teresa: X... X... three.

Travis: 13.

Teresa: 13th, to showcase their support. Thank you for that. I can't...

Travis: Man, it's—I've got so very few skills...

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And one of them is my ability to quickly calculate—not—not past like, say, 50. That's not great. But I understand the concept of Roman numerals.

Teresa: Um, and so, by the time Louis the 16th... no, 14th, because the I is in front of the V.

Travis: So it goes XIV?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Yes, 14th.

Teresa: 14th came to power, um, the—

Travis: We should do a whole episode on like the cultural impacts of math.

Teresa: Oh my gosh.

Travis: It did have a big impact!

Teresa: I don't have room in my brain right now.

Travis: Okay, fair enough. It's full of baby thoughts.

Teresa: Full of baby thoughts. Okay. Um, these—the necktie had moved from the practical purpose of something that would protect the soldiers' shirts and buttons and necks and things like that.

Travis: I bet that was something, right? With the glint off your buttons, I bet it also was like, practical there, of like, doesn't catch light and give away your position.

Teresa: Sure. It moved into French fashion.

Travis: Well, yes.

Teresa: Of course. Of course. Um, some would even say that 'cravat,' the French word for tie, is a corruption of the word 'Croat,' from their Croatian friends.

Travis: Okay. Alright.

Teresa: Some would argue. So, but the cravat was really the fashion item that birthed all the rest of the neckties.

Travis: Now, a cravat is like, a scarf-like thing, right? That you tie, and so it's kind of puffy in front, right?

Teresa: Right. Yes. Um, so, in 1660, right after Charles II reclaimed the throne for the restoration, he made it very popular to have these large cravats.

Travis: And they would like, tuck into your shirt, right? That's the difference between an ascot and a cravat, right? A cravat kind of tucks into your jacket or whatever, and an ascot is like, more tied around, like... that's what I'm picturing with Fred from Scooby Doo.

Teresa: [laughs] The placement isn't necessarily what distinguishes them. What distinguishes them is the knot and the tying.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Um, so, they came with tassel strings. You could get a ruffed collar with it. You could use embroidery and lace and all this other kind of stuff with the cravat. Um, and it moved all the way into the 18th century, where wearing a cloth around one's neck was... wasn't tied to social status anymore. It was just, you put on pants, you put on a necktie. [laughs] That's the thing that everybody wears.

Travis: Okay. So I looked it up real quick, 'cause I'm trying to see, and I— from what I can tell from visual differences, like, it seems like a cravat is closer to a tie. Right? Where you would have the knot there, but then instead of it going down in a straight, or even like, flared strip of fabric, it's more of just like...

Teresa: Like a bow.

Travis: It's just fabric, right? It's just kind of a loose, billowy look. Where a cravat...

Teresa: No, where an ascot...

Travis: Where an ascot seems to be more of a scarf-looking thing. Like, it's actually tied? Right? More of a knot. It looks closer to a tie.

Teresa: Yes, and often is accompanied by a pin.

Travis: Yes. But it seems, as I am looking over the images here on Google, fairly interchangeable terminology. Right? Like, you could definitely tell the difference between a cravat and ascot versus a necktie.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Right? But it seems like... cravat and ascot are like, eh, say whatever.

Teresa: When I think of the definitive, like, picture...

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: I think of um, Mr. Darcy wears a cravat, because it's kind of like a bow almost that's poofy. He was a dandy. And um, Freddy Eynsford-Hill from uh, *My Fair Lady*, wears an ascot. So, it's not flouncy. It's the kind of like... it almost looks like just like a one knot, and then a pin.

Travis: Right. And it also looks like it could be worn either tucked in to the jacket, or like, on top of a shirt.

Teresa: Right. Or the vest. Could be tucked into the vest.

Travis: Yes. The weskit.

Teresa: Um, okay.

Travis: And y'know what? It's a good look. People should bring that back. It's a good look.

Teresa: Paul F. Tompkins wears them a lot.

Travis: Yeah. Maybe I'm gonna start bringing this back. Or like, be a part of bringing it back, I should say.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay, we'll see about this. Okay. Anywho.

Teresa: So, let's talk about terminology, still in history context.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So when did the cravat, or collar, turn into a tie? We think the late 1700s. Uh, because this is when, um, the term 'macaronis' was coined.

Travis: Ohh! [sings] Called a feather in his hat and called it macaroni!
Which means like, he thought he was a fancy... fancy fellow, 'cause he stuck a feather in his cap, and he thought he was a macaroni. But in fact, he just looked silly. 'Cause originally, Yankee Doodle was a song to make fun of Americans.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: It also kind of looks – side note – uh, like maybe a cravat is under the collar, and an ascot is worn inside the shirt. Maybe vice versa. Maybe both.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But it's something like that.

Teresa: Again, I'm not quite certain it has to do with placement, and more has to do with the knot.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Um, so, speaking of knots... here's the thing – uh, one of the illustrations of these complex knots that were available at the time was called the Neck-clothitania.

Travis: [gasps] Yay! That's great!

Teresa: [laughs] In 1818. Um, and it was, y'know, it was basically the YouTube tutorial of the day, where—

Travis: Yes, which is how I learned to tie a bowtie.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Hint – if you're looking for a good YouTube tutorial to tie a bowtie, look for ones where they're tying it in a mirror instead of facing the camera, 'cause if they're tying it in a mirror and filming the mirror, it's easier—at least, it was easier for me to mimic their hand motions, because it wasn't backward.

Teresa: Right, so you didn't have to reverse it. It was already reversed 'cause of the mirror.

Travis: Exactly.

Teresa: Um, and then, the next one in 1828 was called the Art of Tying the Cravat, which had 16 different lessons and 32 different tying styles.

Travis: Oh boy. Hey, good news – you don't need that.

Teresa: You don't need all of those. We'll talk about that. Alright, so. Where did the tie start?

Travis: Uh, are you asking me? Italy.

Teresa: No.

Travis: America.

Teresa: Okay, wait a second.

Travis: France! Germany!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: New Zealand!

Teresa: Stop it. [laughing] That's not what I was exactly asking. I said where, and I meant when. And uh, so, during the Industrial Revolution, between the 18th and 19th century, this is when the tie that we know it emerged.

Travis: Because with machines, you could make it standard? Is that the idea? Of like, you could reproduce the fabric over and over and over again into a tie? I mean, it's probably definitely easier to do in the Industrial Res—
Rev—[sighs] I almost said Industrial Resolution, and that's nothing.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: Uh, not just that, but I mean, people didn't have time. They were working constantly in these factories that never seemed to close. And so like, taking hours to tie your tie wasn't something that anybody wanted to do.

Travis: And probably were also looking at this as, once again, just guessing from stuff we've talked about in the past. So now that there's an emerging middle class, people wanted to wear neckwear, but probably couldn't afford like, "I'm gonna get my tailor to make a beautiful silken cravat," so I'm just gonna go buy a tie off the rack.

Teresa: Exactly. So, this is when the first tie knot that we know, called the foreign hand knot, was starting to be used.

Travis: We'll explain what these are, I promise.

Teresa: Yes. It's basically a slipknot. If you know anything about knots.

Travis: Like the band.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No.

Teresa: [blows raspberry]

Travis: Like I said, we'll go into it. Let's stick with the history, and then we'll explain different styles.

Teresa: Okay. Um, these were often used for school ties, for boy scout ties, for y'know, things that weren't necessarily about status, but more about like, we're all gonna dress the same.

Travis: Right. Uniform.

Teresa: Uniform. Exactly. Um, so, there... as usual, there has to be one sort of thing that happens where like, "Oh, but we're special."

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: [laughs] So, that's when the ascot really comes in in the 1880s. Um, King Edward the... seventh. I got it.

Travis: Nice.

Teresa: Wore an ascot to the royal horse races, which is actually why it is named after the Royal Ascot. 'Cause it's a race.

Travis: Oh, okay. Cool.

Teresa: Um, but still. I mean, if we're thinking about that kind of like, slipknot look, and the foreign hand, and then, the ascot, these aren't quite the ties that we recognize today with like, the wider arrow end and the slimmer end.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, that took 'til the 1920s.

Travis: I'm not surprised by that whatsoever.

Teresa: Um, Jesse Langsdorf, a New York tie maker, cut the fabric at a 45 degree angle around the bottom edge. This meant, now, the tie could drape evenly when tied in a standard knot without having to twist it. Thus, the modern necktie was born!

Travis: Bum bada dum!

Teresa: And it is still cut and designed the same way that Langsdorf cut it all those years ago todayyy!

Travis: [laughs] What was that? Did you melt?

Teresa: No, I'm just—

Travis: Oh, you're doing a 1920s voice.

Teresa: I'm doing more 1920s business.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. Now... we have the shape. Here comes the decades. The patterns of the decades. We've got art deco in the '30s. Those went on ties. We've got the skinny tie from the '50s, cut to compliment the slimmer style suits. Then we've got the '60s and '70s, where ties started getting wider, because the collars started getting wider. The shoulders of the suits started getting wider.

Travis: Everything started getting bigger.

Teresa: Everything started getting bigger. Then you have the bolo tie. Uh, which may... we'll have to talk about this again. May have originated from wearing a hat behind your back. So, the strings of the hat.

Travis: Oh! Okay.

Teresa: Um, but we'll... that's not today.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Oh, I couldn't do it. Alright, and then, today, we get back into standardized tie pretty much being three and a fourth inches to three and a half inches wide. But they do come in any color, shape, pattern. Uh, y'know, you can get knit ties. You can do like, taffeta ties. I mean, the sky is the limit.

Travis: Twist ties.

Teresa: Nooo. Uh, and it really has become, in the standardized "menswear" uniform, the way to show your personality. There are some people who wear, y'know, cartoon ties, and flag ties, and I don't know.

Travis: Patterned.

Teresa: Patterned ties, checkered ties...

Travis: With various things. School emblems, perhaps.

Teresa: Of course. John T. Molloy, in his book, *Dress for Success*, says, "Show me a man's ties, and I'll tell you who he is or who he's trying to be."

Travis: Okay. That seems... I don't know. A little dismissive, but okay. Now, listen. I know. I know why everyone tuned in here, and it's to talk about when to tie what tie with what, and all of that. And we're gonna talk about that, but first... thank you note for our sponsors.

[theme music plays]

Travis: This week, we would like to send a thank you note to Quip. Hey, Quip. Thanks for being you. Thanks for everything. Because here's the thing... I love Quip. And I know I say that every time, and I know I say 'here's the thing,' but this thing I really mean, and I'm really presenting it to you on a silver platter.

Because, for the longest time, I did not take care of my teeth. It was just not a thing I thought about. It always seemed like something that was a waste of time, and I only ever did it, y'know, when my teeth felt dirty or whatever, and that is not a good way to go. And the thing is, I had, forever, dentists telling me like, "You need to use an electric toothbrush." But I never wanted to, because they always felt too strong. They made my gums hurt, and they were always too bulky.

But Quip is designed to be very, uh, very slim. Not bulky at all, and has a nice gentle vibration that still gets the job done, but isn't gonna make you feel like you're beating up your mouth. And they have a built-in timer that guides gentle brushing for the dentist recommended two minutes, which, let's be honest, none of us are doing without a reminder. And it pulses every 30 seconds, so you know when to move to different areas of your mouth.

And if you sign up with Quip, they'll automatically deliver brush heads to you every three months for clean, new bristles right on schedule. The sleek, intuitive design is simple, and it comes with a travel cap that doubles as a mirror mount. Which, you think like, "Well, okay, that's nice, but we don't need that." You will use the heck out of it, I promise. And it starts at just \$25, and you'll get your first refill pack free at GetQuip.com/Shmanners.

This is a simple way to support our show and start brushing better, but you have to go to GetQuip.com/Shmanners to get your first refill free. Go right now to GetQuip.com/Shmanners.

[music plays]

Renee: Hi! I'm Renee Colvert.

Alexis: I'm Alexis Preston!

Renee: And we're the hosts of the smash hit podcast, Can I Pet Your Dog? Now, Alexis.

Alexis: Yes.

Renee: We got big news.

Alexis: Uh oh.

Renee: Since last we did a promo, our dogs have become famous.

Alexis: World famous.

Renee: World, like...

Alexis: Stars on the Hollywood walk of fame.

Renee: Second big news.

Alexis: Mm-hmm?

Renee: The reviews are in.

Alexis: Mm-hmm?

Renee: Take yourself to Apple Podcasts. You know what you're gonna hear? We're happy.

Alexis: It's true!

Renee: We're a delight. A great distraction from the world.

Alexis: I like that part a lot.

Renee: So if that's what you guys are looking for, you gotta check out our show. But what else can they expect?

Alexis: We've got dog tech, dog news, celebrities with their dogs, all dog things!

Renee: All the dog things. So if that interests you... well, get yourself on over to Maximum Fun, every Tuesday.

Travis: Okay, we got some questions. Not surprising, a lot of them were very procedural.

Teresa: Right. Okay, wait a second. Before we go into questions...

Travis: Okay, wait. Uh-huh?

Teresa: Here are some basics. The first one being, when do I wear what type of tie?

Travis: Okay. This was a question from a lot of people.

Teresa: Okay. Here are the bullet points. It's typically accepted that the ascot and the bowtie are for formal morning or day occasions. Specifically, the bowtie for like, a day wedding.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Business formal and black tie occasions usually call for a solid tie, which can mean gray, black, blue, depending upon your suit. Right? Um, but if you work in maybe the arts, or—

Travis: Well, side note there – if you're doing a tuxedo? Bowtie is the more appropriate, especially if you have a, uh, pleated or ridged shirt. Yeah, pleated is the word I'm looking for. Bowtie with that is usually the way to go. You can probably get away with a solid black necktie, but...

Teresa: Right. Depending upon the stated dress and whether it's day or evening.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Okay. And then, if you work in the arts or another laid back environment, it's okay to do more of a skinny tie or a patterned tie. Then,

you want to consider seasons with the weight of the tie. Heavier fabrics for warmer—uh, sorry, cooler weather. Lighter fabrics for cooler—for warmer weather.

Travis: Warmer. Yes.

Teresa: Alright. But then, like, if you're going out for dinner, if you're going to a holiday party, if you're doing... I mean, basically anything, right? Anything other than something like, formal, like work or a gala. Wear what you want, right?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Showcase your personality. Um, y'know, just know your audience. If you're going to a funeral, maybe not a novelty tie.

Travis: Yes. Y'know what? I'm not even gonna say maybe. Unless—well, I say that. Maybe if the deceased would've found it funny, okay. Cool. If it's a tribute to them, it's fine.

Teresa: [laughs] Alright. One more thing. One more thing.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Okay. [clears throat] So, placement for ties in general, and I'm talking the long ties.

Travis: Okay. Like, where it lands?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay, 'cause this was Kit's question. "What is the general accepted length for a tie?"

Teresa: It should—the tip of the tie should rest right at your belt. Not below, not above.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: Um, a tie should never be visible under your collar. If you can see the tie under the—

Travis: Oh yes, uh-huh.

Teresa: Under your collar, the tie is too wide. Select a skinnier tie for your smaller collar. Um, and if you want to wear a tie bar or a tie pin—

Travis: This was also a question we got a lot.

Teresa: It generally goes between the third and fourth buttons on your shirt.

Travis: My general rule for that is that, if you are going to button your jacket, it should be just peeking above that. Right? So you can see it with the jacket closed, but it's not like, super high up, right? You're just seeing it right at the V of the jacket.

Teresa: I like the one that you have that's like a chain across the tie.

Travis: Yes. So here's the purpose of a tie clip is to not just keep the tie together, right? So that the back side, y'know, the short end, the thin end, doesn't come flying out, but also to pin it to the shirt so it stays in position. So what I have is one that clips to the tie, and then has a chain that goes around and hooks on the button in the back, so that was, the tie has some movement, but it doesn't keep it right there.

Um, also, when you're talking about length, if you're wearing a vest over it, the tie should not hang out below the vest. Um, and the only exception to seeing it with the collar is if it is just the points of the collar, and not a continuous collar around the back.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: You see that a lot with like, cravats and ascots.

Teresa: That makes sense.

Travis: Or bowties. Um, now, here's the thing. Here's the biggest question we got. Uh, and I'll sum it up here from this question from Stefan. "Is there a social danger in your choice of knot in a necktie? Might a foreign hand count as underdressing, and a full Windsor count as overdressing?"

Okay, here's the thing about it. As far as I know, and I can find nothing to tell me I'm wrong, formality isn't the overriding factor to decide what the knot of the tie is. What *does* determine that is two factors, and that is the shape of the collar, and like, your personal kind of body type, what—how the—for example, Teresa said, uh, the foreign hand skinny tie became really popular with slim fitted suits, right?

Teresa: Right. 'Cause it's a smaller knot, it's a thinner tie, and it's a slimmer suit. It all goes together.

Travis: Right. So, if you look at a collar, right? And you look at the angles of the points of the collar, right? That is what's going to help you determine what knot you want to do. So, if they are very straight, or like, create a narrow opening, a foreign hand knot, a skinnier knot, is appropriate there. If you have a very flared collar, and you do a skinny knot, it's not going to look right. Right? It's gonna look too skinny.

Same if you have a wide tie, um... so I guess what I'm saying is, there's three factors.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: But if you have a very wide tie, a very skinny knot is not going to work.

Teresa: Right. It's gonna look all bunched up and funny.

Travis: Right. So what you're really judging on is the shape of the collar, the shape of the tie, and how you are wearing your suit fitted. Right? All of those things help you match together. The collar matches to the tie, matches to the jacket, is basically how you think about it.

So, if you're thinking about it in terms of what knot to wear... ha. K-N-O-T. Knot to wear.

Teresa: [laughs] Good one.

Travis: Um, you have the foreign hand—

Teresa: Now, see, that one was funny!

Travis: Thank you. It was unintentional.

Teresa: It was very intelligent.

Travis: Well, it was unintentional. [laughs] Um, so, the foreign hand is the skinniest. And there's really only three necktie knots you need to know. There's a bunch of other ones, if you want to get fancy with it and weird. But there's the—

Teresa: Not weird. Decorative.

Travis: Sure. Flair. I meant weird in a fun way. Let's get weird with it, right? You have the foreign hand, which is the skinnier, squarer knot. You have the half Windsor, which is slightly more flared, more triangular. And then you have the full or double Windsor – they're the same thing – which is very triangular and very flared. Right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Um, now, in actually tying them, I can't describe it in an audio medium. That's next to impossible. But um—

Teresa: I would describe... the foreign hand is like a slipknot.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: The half Windsor is an extra loop in that slipknot.

Travis: Yeah, so, as you're tying it, it loops over one side of the tie. Right.

Teresa: Yeah. And then the full Windsor is plus another loop on the other side.

Travis: Yes. And if you're like me, and you know that like, halfway through the evening, or maybe even sooner, you're gonna undo that top button of your shirt, you want to go with at least a half Windsor, if not a double, because that will still create enough room that, as your collar spreads out, there's not gonna be huge gaps on either side of it between the tie and the collar.

Teresa: So you can be a little more, uh... what do I want to say? Sneaky about undoing your top—the top of your shirt.

Travis: Yes. Very much so. I tend to like a style for a more casual engagement, where I will have like, two buttons undone, and the tie looser, at which point, a full Windsor is the way to go. Or maybe a half, depending, but that's up to you.

Um, so, that's the thing, is it's not like, "Oh, you wore a foreign hand to this event. You're so underdressed." It's more like, you wore a foreign hand with a wide collar and a big thick tie, and it looks kind of weird.

Teresa: right.

Travis: Right. Okay, so more questions. Um, let's see. This is from Kyle. "Is a tie accessory (tie pin, clip) overdressing in certain situations?" I don't think so.

Teresa: It really depends on the style of the clip, right? I mean, I wouldn't go—if you're just going to a regular day at the office, uh, I wouldn't go with

anything that was like, sequined or diamond-encrusted. But a plain silver bar, or even like, um... like the pattern on your glasses. They make tortoise shell tie clips. That's very casual looking.

Travis: I have a bunch that are shaped like swords and anchors and flowers and that kind of thing that I find fun. Um, I think accessories in general, lapel pins, tie clips, uh, that kind of thing? [chef kiss] Love them. Uh, let's see. Uh... this is from Aaron. "Is it okay to wear a tie with a button-type collar?" Now, you could mean two things here, Aaron. You could mean button down collar, at which, yes, because that is why the button downs are there, right? It's to button around the fabric of the necktie.

Now, if you mean a button type collar like, uh, it has no... it has no, uh, collar. Right? That it's just the button, right? And a kind of raised...

Teresa: I always think about, that's like the ones that I saw—I only saw those when I was in like, show choir.

Travis: Right. Or if you mean like, uh, a wingtip, where I was talking about, where you adjust the tips of the collar. I keep grabbing the skin of my neck, because I am wearing a collared shirt. Anyways, um, in that circumstance, I would avoid wearing a necktie. But, uh, with a band that has no tips, that's where like, an ascot or a cravat would work. Right? Because—

Teresa: Or even a really fancy button cover. Those are nice too.

Travis: Yes. Right. Now, with a wing tip, uh, where it's y'know, just the tips of it, that's a perfect time for a bowtie.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Or an ascot or a cravat. Um, but if you're wearing the top button buttoned, that's where you're going—

Teresa: Stop pulling on your neck skin!

Travis: I know, I don't know why I'm doing that. Like I said, I'm wearing a collared shirt.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: If you're wearing the top button buttoned, that's where you want the ascot, which ties outside, or the bowtie. If you're wearing it open, that's a perfect time for a cravat, 'cause it's worn inside the shirt. Badabing, badaboom, how do I know things? [laughs] I don't know.

Um, let's see. Uh, oh! This is from Amanda. "For nonformal ties/bowties situation, what should your tie match? Is it okay to mix and match color patterns with pocket squares and shirts?" We also got that question from Buchanan. "I'm a trans guy starting my transition, and I would like to know the rules with patterns and colors. For example, do patterned button downs get a tie, or just solid colored shirts?"

Teresa: Listen. Do what you want to do.

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: It's more about the occasion than it is about the matching or... I mean, even like pattern mixing is a really great way to do these kind of things. It's about the occasion.

Travis: My advice? Get a second opinion. That's what I do with Teresa, if I'm like, "I think this looks good," I will go to Teresa and like, "Am I right that this looks good together?" Right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Then wear it with confidence.

Teresa: Um, I would stay away from... actual clashing on purpose. Unless... unless you're really making a fashion statement. Because what will happen is, if you really try and clash, you're just—you're drawing attention to yourself. If that's what you want, then go ahead and clash, but—

Travis: I would say, if you're starting out, right, and you're just like, basics of matching things... um, you—solid colored ties with patterned shirts. Patterned ties with colored shirts. Or like, solid colored shirts, are a good way to go. Uh, you want them to be complimentary. So like, if you're wearing a red shirt, I wouldn't wear a red tie. But, if the tie has some red in it, right? That's a good look.

Um, and vice versa. If you're wearing a patterned shirt that has a little bit of purple in it, and you want to wear a solid purple tie, great. Um, now, in general, you don't want to match your tie to your pocket square. Right? Now, I've seen it work. I've seen it be a good look. But in general, I would say you want it to be complimentary. Like a solid purple tie with a pocket square with some purple in it.

The only time I've ever seen it work is if it's like, basically prom. That's the only time.

Teresa: Yeah. I mean, it's a—it's a set that you would buy together for a formal event, like a prom or a wedding or something.

Travis: Right. Um, but yeah, I think as far as matching it goes, complimentary is fine.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's what you're looking for, things that—

Teresa: And you can't go wrong with a white pocket square with anything else that you're wearing.

Travis: Yes. Um, and so, if you're looking to build up your kind of tie arsenal, here's my recommendations. Uh, black tie, like a black, solid tie, and a silver tie. And then, a black tie with a black pattern on top of it. A silver tie with some kind of light patterning. Right? Texture is really good for that.

And then, you can start going with patterns, right? Patterns like black, white, and silver patterns. Red and black. Like, those kinds of things where it's going to match with a lot of things.

Teresa: And I would stay—I would—if you're just starting it, stay with geometric patterns instead of prints.

Travis: And small patterns are usually better, uh, to match than larger patterns. Um, if you're just looking for your basic arsenal, I also recommend thinking in terms of seasons, right? Like, having some spring colors in your arsenal is a good way to go, and having some autumnal colors. Having some browns and oranges and that kind of thing is a good way to go.

Um, yeah. So hopefully, that's a good starter, right? That's—yeah!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Alright, that's gonna do it for us. Thank you so much. Thank you for listening. If you enjoyed this episode, share it. This is, I think, going to be a very helpful one for a lot of people. People—jaws on the floor, just, "What? That's what a tie is?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, let's see. You can go on whatever your pod catcher is and rate and review our show. You can follow us on Twitter, @ShmannersCast. If you have ideas for episodes, which, this one was, and I'm going to find it here in a second, then you can send them to ShmannersCast@gmail.com. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, which is where we get a lot of these listener submitted questions. Um, and then, also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of the fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. Please go join that group if you love to give and get excellent advice from other Shmanners fans.

Also, thank you to Alex, our indomitable research assistant. We could not do this without her. Thank you very much. And uh, she is made possible by your donations to the Max Fun network, and that, y'know, always helps us grow our show, so pay attention in the coming months for the MaxFunDrive!

Travis: Uh, this episode was suggested by Eli. Thank you so much, Eli. Um, and that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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