

Fashions in the Law: What You Need to Know About Neckties

by Evan Loeffler

Warning: the following article contains sexist remarks that may be offensive to some men. Reader discretion is advised.

One constant among male lawyers, young and old, is the necktie in their wardrobe. Another constant is the universal dislike male lawyers have for this clothing article. A more thorough review of the necktie, however, provides the reader with a better appreciation for men's neckwear.

It is important to understand how the necktie became a part of modern man's formal wear. Originally, the necktie served a very important purpose. Men, as a rule, drool a lot. Despite this trait, a quirk in evolution resulted in humanity's disdain towards the Spotted-Belly male, preferring its much rarer cousin, the Clean-Breasted male. Spotted-Bellies had to resort to artificial means to cover their natural marks. The necktie was therefore introduced as essentially a bib.

Since its debut, however, the necktie has evolved into the only means for the male lawyer to make a fashion statement. Typically, required to dress conservatively, the male lawyer's only means to demonstrate his sense of style is on his tie.

Neckties come in many shapes, sizes, colors and styles. The following, entirely incomplete, list makes a few observations of the most common.

Straight Ties

By far the most common style of necktie, there are many substyles and methods for tying this type of neckwear. Straight ties come in fat, thin and regular widths. Fat ties were briefly in style during the 1970's, but that era was also the only time brown, orange and green on the same garment was considered the height of fashion. Fat ties may have been an overreaction from the thin ties of the 1960's. Thin ties were phased out since they were absolutely hopeless as a shirtfront protector.

There are several knots the straight tie wearer can use. By far the most common is the four-in-hand knot. This knot makes a small, tight knot which is easily loosened. For shorter people with thinner necks, there is the Windsor knot, developed by noted pencil-neck, the Duke of Windsor. This knot uses more of the tie, thus making the ends shorter. This is an advantage for those lawyers who get their legs tangled in their necktie. The drawback is that Windsor knots create a knot the size of a football.

Bow Ties

The bow tie is not for everyone. While they do have the advantage that bow tie wearers rarely, if ever, drag their tie through their soup, they subject the wearer to endless unsolicited psychological discussions about what went wrong in the bow tie wearer's childhood. Much of this is directly attributable to the fact that bow ties are difficult to tie. Bow tie wearers insist that tying a bow tie is no more difficult than tying a shoelace. This is, of course, highly misleading. Tying a shoe around one's neck is not only extremely difficult but extremely uncomfortable.

Other Ties

There are other officially recognized styles of necktie, but they are frowned upon by most judges. These styles include the string or "bolo" tie, which does not tie; the clip-on tie, which also does not tie; and the ascot, which is essentially a glorified handkerchief.

Straight ties have several bizarre cousins which should also be avoided in the courtroom. These include the "fish" tie, which looks like a fish; the "fringed" tie, which has tassels hanging from it; and the "naked lady with strategically placed flashing lights" tie which needs no explanation, but is particularly offensive in these politically correct times because of the waste of electricity required to power the lights.

The necktie appears to be a permanent fixture in the male lawyer's wardrobe. Male lawyers should remember, however, that it could be a lot worse: they are spared the ignominy of our English brethren who are required to wear wigs.