

Fashion Vocabulary



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There is so much to gain when we learn the English language online, and perhaps the best thing of all is when we can use that language in the real world.

There is an enormous amount of English vocabulary surrounding clothing, and fashion in general, so here we have a rundown of some of the terms we may come across at the Fashion Week. Of course, these are all words and phrases that will be useful whenever we are seeking to talk about clothing.

We will break these down into categories to make them easier to understand.

Headwear

Hats are distinctly in fashion at the moment, and may well feature strongly in London Fashion Week. Here are some of the more popular types: **beany** (baggy, woolen hat); **cap** (a casual peaked hat, sometimes called a *baseball cap*); **flat cap** (traditionally worn by older people,

these are tweed caps, with a firm peak, which are very fashionable); ***Panama hat*** (a white or ivory formal hat, usually worn by men, and very stylish with smart casual wear); ***floppy hat*** (any hat with a wide, loose brim).

On top of headwear we might come across jewelry. **Earrings** go, unsurprisingly, in the ears. A ***necklace***, equally predictably, is jewelry that is worn on the neck, usually with a silver or gold chain.



Torso

There are two kinds of t-shirt, which are casual, short sleeved tops. A round neck t-shirt has a round neck hole, and a Polo shirt is slightly more formal, with a collar. A shirt is a long-sleeved garment (although, confusingly, there are short sleeved types), often made of cotton, with buttons up the front. A blouse is a shirt usually worn by women, with more fitted styles and a smaller collar.

A jumper is the woolen or cotton extra layer that is worn over the shirt, handy for British winters... and springs, autumns and, sadly, often summer. It is also known as a jersey or pullover. A jumper with buttons which opens up fully is known as a cardigan, or cardy for short. A sleeveless jumper is called a tank top.

Less formal tops include sweat shirts, a cotton casual pullover, often with a picture or logo on it. A hoodie is like a sweat shirt, but includes a hood. Outer garments for outdoor wear are called coats. But there are many varieties of these: bomber jackets (short coats), golf coats, rain coats, overcoats (heavy, warm and formal coats).

Mackintoshes and waterproofs - sometimes called kagoules and carried in case of wet weather - are other common types of coat.

A jacket is a short, fairly smart indoor coat, often worn with a suit or for work or business. It contains a handy amount of pockets for storage.

Jewelry wise, a bracelet is worn on the wrist. More casual, and often supporting a good cause, is a wristband. A bangle is a wide bracelet, often of ethnic styling. Cufflinks are like removable buttons sometimes worn with formal shirts.

Bottom Half

Trousers are worn to cover the entire bottom half of the body. They might be called jeans (usually made from denim), chinos (smart casual cotton trousers), drain pipes (tight fitting trousers with narrow legs sometimes known as skinny jeans.). Shorts are trousers which end at the knee or higher. On the beach, swimming shorts or trunks are usually worn by men, and bathing costumes (all in ones) or bikinis (two piece) are worn more usually by women.

The terms skirts and dresses can cause confusion. A skirt starts at the waist, while a dress is full length. A kilt is a heavy, pleated skirt worn by women and traditionally by Scotsmen, allegedly with nothing underneath, although that is probably not true. A sarong is a loose skirt that is tied at the waist. Usually it is worn by women, but occasionally by men. The footballer David Beckham introduced a trend for men to wear sarongs a few years ago.

Sometimes tights (all in one) or stockings (separate for each leg) can be worn under skirts and dresses.

Footwear

There are many styles of shoe; clogs, sandals, brogues, lace ups, trainers, boots, slippers. Under these people often wear socks - very short socks often worn with trainers and shorts are called trainer socks, slightly bigger are ankle socks. In the old days, shorts were worn mostly by men and boys, along with knee length socks. These are called long socks.



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London Fashion week is coming up!

HEADWEAR

	BEANY Baggy, woolen hat		BERET A round flattish cap of felt or cloth		CAP A casual peaked hat, also called baseball cap
	FLOPPY HAT Any hat with a wide, loose brim		PANAMA HAT A formal hat, very stylish with smart casual wear		TOP HAT A man's formal hat with a high cylindrical crown

TORSO

	TOP TANK		BLOUSE		T-SHIRT		POLO T-SHIRT
	JUMPER		HOODIE		BOMBER JACKET		RAIN COAT

BOTTOM HALF

	JEANS		SKIRT		DRESS		SHORTS
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FOOTWEAR

	SNEAKERS		HIGH-HEELED SHOE		FLAT SHOE		SANDALS		SLIPPERS
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FOR MORE VOCABULARY, CHECK OUT [HTTPS://ENGLISHLIVE.EF.COM/BLOG/](https://englishlive.ef.com/blog/)

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Underwear

Again, there are lots of names for basically the same thing. Pants is a general term for underwear in Britain (the word means trousers in the US, which can lead to some embarrassing moments.) Boxers are short like pants, and Y fronts have a Y shaped material in the front. Knickers is the name often used for women's pants. A bra (short for brassiere, but that word is rarely used today) is a chest supporter for women. A jock strap is a pouch worn by men to protect and support their genitalia in some sports.

Buying Clothes

Mostly, we buy our clothes off the peg, in other words from a rack or shelf in a shop. We either know our size, or try the clothes on. More expensive clothing might be bespoke, made to measure, or tailor made. This often includes expensive suits (two or three-piece formal wear, often worn with a tie; or dinner suit, which is worn with a bow tie), dresses and shirts. For these, measurements

will be taken, and the names for these relate to the part of the body being measured. For example, head measurement, waist measurement.

Styles and Materials

The most common materials for clothes making in England are cotton and wool (more for winter wear). Cheaper items sometimes contain nylon, or polyester, which many people do not like to feel against their skin. Silk is a soft, shiny material that is often found in ties and more expensive clothes. Often handkerchiefs (for mopping a brow, or blowing the nose) will be made of silk, more commonly though cotton.

There is much vocabulary describing styles - stripes (thin bands of color); polka dot (summersy spots of color); elegant is a term for smart, and smart casual usually means jacket and trousers, with open necked shirt for men, the term is looser for women. Formal means a suit for men, a dress, blouse and skirt/trousers or trouser suit for women. Formal can also mean a dress suit (or dinner suit) for men - i.e. a bow tie, and a long dress for women.

Useful Phrases when Shopping

Buyers might start a conversation by asking an assistant:

Do you have (hold up an example) in a size (give your size)?

They might ask for a shop's clothing range, usually described by the seasons, for example, 'Autumn Range' or 'Spring Range'.

Another common question helps us to find the clothing we want. 'Could you point me to... (the hats, the women's wear, t shirts, etc.)' is a good way of achieving this.

As with most aspects of using the English language, as we build up our vocabulary around fashion, we can make ourselves better understood. The terms in this article are a good starting point.

Reference:

EF English Live (s.f.). Fashion Vocabulary: Talk about fashion in English. Retrieved from: <https://englishlive.ef.com/en/blog/english-in-the-real-world/talk-about-fashion-in-english/>