

Trouser Length – Are Your Pants Too Long, Too Short, or Just Right?

When it comes to getting the best fit in trousers, knowing your waist measurement is not enough. Granted, waist size may be a trickier number to pin down, as things tend to fluctuate in the middle, even among the fittest of us. But for the perfect classic look, you also need to get the trouser length just right.

Luckily, the inseam is a far more stable measurement than the waist, and it should only fluctuate with extreme fashion trends (which we at Apparel Illustrated generally avoid) and perhaps a loss of height with age. So how do you know if you're wearing the correct trouser length? I have a few quick tips that make assessing trouser length very simple.

Assessing Trouser Length

Trousers that are too long are easily recognised by having two or more horizontal folds—also known as breaks—on the front of each leg when standing. Extra-long trousers make you look shabby, and they give the impression that you don't take pride in your appearance or can't afford a tailor.



TOO LONG TROUSERS

On the other hand, trousers that are too short do not have any breaks on the front of the trouser leg when standing straight. This high-tide look gives the impression that you haven't purchased a new pair of trousers since high school, or you don't know how to wash your trousers without causing shrinkage.



TOO SHORT TROUSERS

The correct trouser length results in a single, natural break when standing with straight legs. Off-the-shelf trousers and jeans are often too long and, therefore, should be hemmed correctly. Many times, this can be done by the in-store tailor for as little as \$10 to \$15.



CORRECT LENGTH TROUSERS

How to Shorten Trousers

Unless your mother taught you some mad sewing skills, or you paid attention in home economics class, don't mess with the trouser leg length yourself. It's extremely difficult to make an at-home sewing job look professional, and the amount of money you'll save is so insignificant that it's not worth the trouble or risk.

As far as jeans and khakis go, most shoemakers offer a hemming service. Because denim and twill can be such heavy fabrics, sewing them requires a powerful machine. Professional machines also use a heavy-gauge needle that won't break as it stitches the hem all the way through two layers of material.

You can also take khakis to a tailor, which is where you should always take your dress pants. Some tailors will have you try on the pants and mark where the new hem should be, especially if you're really not sure what the exact trouser length should be. Others will simply ask for your inseam and tailor the pants to that length. Once you find the perfect measurement, fittings should become a thing of the past.

To Cuff or Not to Cuff?

Some guys try to manage excess trouser length by cuffing the hems. While this technique may save you money, you'll be losing out in the style department. While cuffs do come back in style every now and then, they're a trendy—not classic—look. By the time you've caught onto the fad, it will likely be over, so it's best to avoid those cuffs altogether.

Also, keep in mind that proper cuffs are sewn in place so that the right side of the fabric is showing. Folding up the bottom edge of a regular pair of pants is never acceptable. Resist the urge to cuff your pants; even jeans shouldn't be rolled or cuffed. Save this look for your '50s greaser costume!

Watch The "Trouser Length" Video Tutorial

Simply [CLICK HERE](#) to view the explanatory video tutorial in full HD.

Staying Above the Fray

Another shortcut taken by some men is to cut the trouser length and leave the hem unfinished. This is generally done with jeans and is even worse than cuffing or wearing your pants too long or short! Frayed hems are not appropriate under any circumstances. Even in the most casual setting, it looks cheap and careless. Worse yet, I've seen some people try this with khakis and other casual pants. It's worthy of a facepalm for sure!



Frayed jeans hems are either made to look worn when they're manufactured, or they're actually the result of a trouser length that's too long. Long, unfinished hems drag along the floor or pavement, gradually unravelling. This look is not the way to demonstrate your rebelliousness. Much like your fingernails, jeans should be kept neat and clean at all times. If you really want to go wild, grow a three-day beard or, even better, buy a leather jacket that will definitively convey the point (the right way)!

That being said, there's no need to donate your frayed jeans to charity. Jeans with scraggly hems can be saved and reborn as classic jeans for as little as \$10. With the exception of those jeans that are sold in "destroyed" condition, most long, frayed jeans have plenty of excess fabric to work with when creating the new, tailored hem. Your shoemaker or tailor can examine the jeans in comparison to your regular inseam and see if there's enough length to cut off the shaggy ends and turn the rest under for resewing.