


A BRIEF HISTORY OF



A brief history of **BLAZERS**

Michelle Rowley looks back at the prominence of blazers and how you can use them to elevate your style



If you are ready to take on a fully-lined blazer with welt pockets, then look no further than Nina Lee's Richmond blazer. The clear and detailed instructions have got you covered. The result is a moder, easy-to-wear blazer thanks to the relaxed long-line silhouette

If you haven't worn a blazer since high school, perhaps it's time to take another look at this classic wardrobe staple. With a wealth of fantastic blazer sewing patterns available for the hobby dressmaker, now could be the time to take on the satisfying challenge of sewing this classic garment. A blazer is undoubtedly far from a quick sew, but its timeless appeal and versatility will be worth the extra time and effort. She explores the history and power of the blazer and offers some pattern, sewing and styling tips to get you sewing a garment you will reach for time and time again.

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Tempted by the collarless blazer? Vogue 9338 is a loose-fitting unlined jacket with a range of sleeve options

your wardrobe, it could certainly be the hardest working. Popping on this wardrobe workhorse easily transitions an outfit from day to night, by not only pulling the outfit together to look more polished, but also keeping us warm when the temperature drops. Despite the modern-day blazer's more relaxed look, it is still very difficult to look anything other than stylish and smart when wearing a blazer. It is no coincidence that, regardless of the season, major fashion houses continue to feature blazers in their runway collections. 2021 was no exception, with Versace, Gucci, Kenzo and Max Mara amongst many others sending models down the runway looking sharp in blazers this year.

Someone who knows the power of the blazer is HRH The Duchess of Cambridge. Her collection of down-to-earth business blazers became her working-from-home uniform staple during lockdown video calls, and she's continued to champion the blazer since getting back to attending public events. She chose both red and white Zara blazers to show her support for England at the European Football Championships and held court in a navy Smythe blazer at Wimbledon. Since a well-made blazer elevates any outfit from basic to stylish and instantly smart, it is no wonder that The Duchess of Cambridge incorporates them into her public wardrobe so often.



If you would prefer to make a statement with the pockets, then it has to be the Heather Blazer from Friday Pattern Company. The oversized fit and statement pockets have made this blazer very popular with the Instagram sewing community

It was another royal style icon who really raised the popularity of blazers. In the 1980s and 90s, paparazzi photographs of the late Princess Diana running errands in gilt-buttoned navy-blue blazers were ubiquitous. As Lucy Bishop, auctioneer and textiles specialist at Kerry-Taylor Auctions, explains: "The epitome of the 'sloane ranger', the blazer was a crucial component of Diana's off-duty uniform. She must have owned dozens of

ABOUT MICHELLE ROWLEY

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near identical ones: definitive proof of the blazer's significance within the quintessentially British wardrobe!" Indeed, no 1980s wardrobe was complete without a shoulder-padded "power-suit" jacket, but a blazer's origins lie far from the boardroom.

The word 'blazer' is thought to derive from the ship HMS Blazer, the crew of which wore blue and white striped jackets known as blazers. The stylish but hardwearing blazer later became popular with rowers in the second half of the 1800s, when rowing became a popular sport for university students. Cut from thick flannel, the loose-fitting jackets not only kept the rowers warm but also served helped spectators to identify their team participating in a race. For this reason, many teams chose brightly coloured and wide-striped fabrics to help identify them. Oxford University, meanwhile, chose a navy blue, providing the first version of the classic blue blazer. Eager to show off their rowing team credentials around campus, the rowers would wear their blazers around college, leading to other sports teams wanting in

on the action. Soon, the rugby, soccer and even croquet teams were wearing blazers as part of their team kit, both on and off the field. The blazer was now considered a sporting jacket rather than being uniquely tied to rowing. Its popularity grew and the blazer became established in the everyday wardrobe.

Off the back of its UK following, the blazer started to be worn in the United States by students at Princeton, Harvard and other prestigious universities. Now, blazers are as likely to be worn by fashion editors as prep school students. The blazer, Lucy Bishop explains, "has naturally evolved over time into the versatile and popular garment it is today, and is so deeply rooted in western fashion, and British fashion in particular." The latest adaptation of the blazer has been the collarless blazer, the lack of lapels resulting in a streamlined silhouette. The growing trend for this more casual style, in a time when many of us have adapted to working from home, is perhaps testament to fashion's ability to continually adapt classic pieces to reflect the current mood.

If you would prefer to start more easily, how about [Simplicity 9227](#), an un-lined blazer, aimed at the advanced beginner, with hidden pockets in the side seams. Why not make the trousers that come with the pattern too?



MASTERCLASS TOP TIPS FOR SEWING BLAZERS

Take your time! A blazer can't be made quickly. It's highly recommended to make a toile of the blazer (you don't need to add all the features) to check the fit before you invest time in sewing the real thing.

Try on similar blazers before you start sewing to ensure you'll be happy with the look.

Be careful with your fabric choice. Matching stripes, plaids or patterns might be a headache you don't need for your first blazer.

Use the correct weight interfacing for the look you want to achieve. It is worth trying a few different samples with your fabric first. Choose your pattern carefully. Lined is easier than unlined. Patch pockets are easier than welt pockets. Notched lapels are more challenging than un-notched. It is up to you how much you wish to challenge yourself! Enjoy it. Embrace the slow process, appreciate the opportunity to add new techniques to your skillset and be extremely proud of the result!



BLAZER STYLING

- ✓ Add sophistication to jeans and a T-shirt
- ✓ Add a masculine edge to a pretty dress
- ✓ Pair an over-sized blazer with close fitting tops and trousers for a modern look
- ✓ Choose softer fabric for a more relaxed feel
- ✓ Team with tailored trousers or a lace skirt for an elegant evening style