

PHOTOGRAPHY TRISHA WARD WORDS GRACE CAIN

Cracking the codes

Keen to freshen up your summer-season wardrobe but need a steer as to what rules – if any – you should stick to? Happily, three leading designers are here to add some clarity

SO, DRESS CODES – ARE YOU a devotee or a disruptor? Either way, whether you're a quiet-luxury classicist or a maverick with a flair for the unexpected, you may have noticed that the rules of the fashion game are (again) changing. In February, The Jockey Club ignited a sartorial controversy when it announced that 'outdated' formal dress codes would no longer be upheld at any of its 15 racecourses in a bid to make horse racing more 'accessible and inclusive'. The new advice? Simply to come dressed 'to feel your best' (providing 'your best' doesn't involve inappropriate fancy dress or potentially provocative sports team kits, of course).

Obviously, there's nothing to stop attendees from following the old rules, and – judging from pictures of racegoers at this year's Grand National – most are still happy to use these events as an excuse to get dressed up. But the episode did spark questions around how our wardrobes have evolved over the past few years. Is this the end of the dress code as we know it? Have recent global events catapulted us into a historic style shift? And, even in a world where traditional dress codes are less common, are there still certain expectations? We asked three designers for their thoughts on the new rules – if, indeed, there are any...



From left, Do wears Ralph Lauren jacket £4,330, shirt £350 and tie £190. Masha wears Alessandra Rich dress £1,730. Rachel Trevor-Morgan hat £1,025

ROKSANDA ILINČIĆ

...on the buzz of overdressing



"Since the beginning of my career, my goal has been to give occasionwear an unexpected twist that will make it appropriate for our times. It's always important for me to reflect on where

we are as a society, and to design clothes in dialogue with our current culture rather than just conforming to established norms.

"The pandemic accelerated the natural evolution of our dress codes. I think lockdown encouraged us to feel more comfortable with mixing the different elements of our wardrobes – such as evening garments with everyday sporty pieces. This has been a very positive change, as it's helped people better express who they are through how they dress. That's very important to me. I believe that what we wear should be an extension of our personality.

"Personally, I would always prefer to be overdressed than underdressed. I enjoy the fun of wearing something exceptional. Whenever there is an occasion to dress up, I really go for it, because the whole process – not just the actual party, but the build-up too – brings me joy. I do like to have a dress code as a guide, but I also like to make my own decision on the extent to which I follow it. For example, if an event asks for a hat (and I'm not a person who often wears hats), I might wear a headpiece instead. In any dress code, you can find nuances that will help you feel relaxed.

"For celebrations, I always advise wearing colour because it will enhance your beauty and positive energy. (If you're a little afraid, you can always start gently by adding a colourful accessory.) For a formal occasion, I love our Aldina dress with its painterly print – you could also adapt it for an afternoon event by adding a jacket. Many of my designs are dramatic and full of volume, which reflects another change I have noticed since the pandemic: that people are more open to wearing bolder shades and bigger, more sculptural shapes. I love that there is a greater willingness to stand out." >

LORRAINE SCHWARTZ*...on statement-making jewellery*

“In a world where everything has become a little bit more casual, dress codes have changed and expanded. I’ve just been invited to an event where the dress code is ‘funky cocktail’.... there’s now such

a wide range for what people can wear to any event. The only real exception is specifically black tie – but the right jewellery can elevate any look to the highest ‘black tie’ level. In fact, if you ask me, you should *always* plan what you wear around your jewellery. Think about it: you’re usually investing more money in your jewels than your clothes, and they usually last much longer. I love it when somebody takes an understated outfit and makes their jewellery the focus. Look at when Angelina Jolie wore those emerald earrings at the 2009 Oscars; it was so unexpected, so simple, yet still over the top. If you can make a statement like that, it’s unforgettable.

“When you find a piece you really love, it will work for any dress code. However, I do think every woman should own a pair of hoops. We have some unique exaggerated styles that I love, but you could also go for a smaller hoop or a classic diamond. It’s a great earring to take you from day to night.

“Then I love any type of ring, especially when it’s super clean – I love portrait-cut diamonds, and I *love* a coloured stone. There’s something very cool and understated about wearing just one tone – like an emerald ring with emeralds set around it. Adding white diamonds will make it beautiful, but can be too much. When you stick to one colour, it becomes your basic and you can wear it for any occasion.

“Most of all, I think it’s very important that the jewellery you wear reflects who you are – it has to feel comfortable, and it has to give you that ‘wow’ feeling. I’ll give you an example: when Taylor Swift wore those purple-sapphire and diamond earrings to the Grammys earlier this year. They weren’t her usual style, but I suggested them to her because they were incredible. When she put them on, you could see she felt that Beyoncé moment.

“Whatever jewellery you wear, it should always make a statement (otherwise, what’s the point of wearing it?), but should also be authentic to who you are and what you’re trying to be at that moment.”

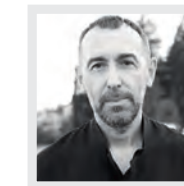


Masha wears Erdem dress £1,295, Victoria Grant hat £259, Pomellato Nudo Classic ring £3,350, Salvatore Ferragamo shoes £960, right. Do wears Ralph Lauren jacket £4,330, trousers £550, shirt £350 and tie £190, Doucal's shoes £375

Jewellery and Womenswear First Floor, Menswear Second Floor, Women's Contemporary, Fourth Floor, Harrods Shoe Heaven, Fifth Floor, and harrods.com

Models Do Byungwook at Stern and Masha Zaytseva at Monster Management. Make-up Camilla Hewitt, Hair Terri Capon at Stella Creative Artists, Lighting Assistant Eliza Bourner, Digital Technician Clare Chong

“FORMALWEAR NEEDS TO HAVE MEANING. WE’RE NO LONGER DRESSING UP FOR THE SAKE OF IT”

ALESSANDRO SARTORI*...on finding a new freedom*

“Before the pandemic, few people considered comfort as a factor of their style. Then, suddenly, it became a focus for us all. I think there’s still a strong place for formalwear, but it needs to have meaning.

We’re no longer just dressing up for the sake of it.

“Certain dress codes can be hard if you’re not used to going beyond certain borders – like, if you always wear denim, or a particular suit. If that’s the case, I suggest researching pictures of people in that specific style, finding the one you like the most and repeating it in a way that suits you. You can find many interesting men who dress beautifully – Pedro Pascal is a good example. Even when he is fancy, he is super chic. He has a feeling of being cool, not only because he dresses well but because of his personal attitude – he is always himself.

“There are also a few key pieces that will help you tackle any event. Firstly, I recommend a tailor-made jacket, because it will complement whichever pant you wear. Black and navy are good choices if it’s your first buy. I know it is obvious for me to mention Zegna pieces, but I really believe that our overshirt is the new blazer. It has the same tailor-made quality and fit. People have been wearing it on the red carpet and transforming their classic looks into utilitarian uber-quality outfits, which I love.

“Secondly, I recommend a short outerwear piece like a bomber or a blouson – preferably with an oversized fit, because this will create a more interesting silhouette. Thirdly, a great shoe that reflects your attitude – and I think our Triple Stitch sneaker is the best base for every dress code because it is chic and modern with just a hint of retro.

“Finally, I will give you a little trick when it comes to pants: when you find a style that suits you perfectly, buy multiple pairs in different colours and use those as the foundation for your wardrobe.

“Personally, I prefer freedom to a strict dress code because I can create my own looks with a hint of personal style. But I also think it’s nice to have a slight guide so that no-one dresses *totally* crazy – it makes for better photos. If someone tells me it’s ‘smart black tie’, for example, I know it is black tie – but the ‘smart’ allows me to play with textiles and shapes. You’ll notice that no-one ever instructs you on the silhouette; that means you could wear black tie with a 28cm bottom pant, and it will result in a completely different look than if you’d chosen a 25cm or 33cm pant. It’s all about finding freedom within the framework.” □

