CHECKLIST: HOW TO BUY A LEATHER JACKET

_____**Step 1: Figure Your Size**

If you already know your coat size, you can skip this step.

_____Measure your chest circumference the same way you would for a suit sizing: wrap a tape measure around the broadest part of your chest, usually just under the armpits on most men. Round up to the next whole number in inches.
Chest Measurement: _____

Most companies size their coats a little larger than a suit of the same measurement, since they're assuming that you'll wear clothing under your jacket. So if you wear a 36R or 36L suit, you should be able to wear a 36 jacket as well — it will be cut more generously to allow room for the clothes underneath.

Men buying custom-tailored jackets, on the other hand, will want to take measurements while wearing the clothes that will be worn under the jacket. We recommend using a detailed measurement guide that takes chest, waist, and additional measurements into account, such as the overcoat measurement guide at A Tailored Suit.

_____**Step 2: Identify the Jacket You Want**

_____Select a style of jacket:
o Bomber — zip-front jacket with tight cuffs and waist and soft, turndown collar that's often lined for warmth
o Fatigue — military-style jackets with flap pockets, a turndown collar and no lapels, epaulets, and sometimes a cinching waist belt
o Double rider — double-breasted jacket with wide lapels, diagonal closure, and a button- or snap-down collar
o Moto — Tight-fitted, no turndown collar, smooth hem and no lapels
o Cattleman — Thigh-length, button-front jacket with a turndown collar but no lapels

_____Select a type of leather:
o Steerhide — tough, stiff leather from adult cows; strong but rough
o Calfskin — light, flexible leather from young cows; supple and sturdy
o Horsehide — tough, more supple than cowhides; has a distinct pattern of surface cracks and veins
o Goatskin — thin, light, and very flexible, but hard to waterproof fully
o Deerskin — light and softly fuzzy; expensive and a bit delicate
o Lambskin — buttery and smooth; lightweight and stretchy
o Yearling — lambskin with the wool still attached as an inner lining
o Bison — thick, stretchy hide with naturally red coloring

_____Select a grade of leather:
o Full grain — made from the outer hide; rugged and durable but sometimes has blemishes from the animal's skin
o Top grain — made by stripping off the full grain and sanding/buffing; smoothest leather but not as strong as full grain
o Genuine leather — made from the inner hide; thin and not durable; often treated chemically to look smoother and glossier
o Bonded leather — leather scraps chemically glued together; cheap but low-quality

_____Select a color:

o Undyed leather — varying colors; simple, rugged look
o Black — the classic motorcycle badass look
o Oxblood/burgundy — a classy, urban option
o Brighter colors — sometimes worn for a "racer" look, especially in the moto style, but generally considered a little feminine

Shopping for leather jackets is usually fairly simple. Once you know the style, fabric, and color you want, there should only be a few brands or options to choose from. Don't be afraid to check a few different places — if you've got a good idea what kind of coat you're looking for, it will only take a few minutes at each stop to see what your options are.

_____**Step 3: Pick Your Source**

_____Identify the kind of tailoring and construction you want:

o Bespoke (completely custom made — most expensive option)
o Made-to-measure (a pre-made pattern sized specifically to you)
o Ready-to-wear (pre-sized off the rack; some stores do in-house adjustments)

_____Select a type of store:

o Department stores (Sears, Macy's, etc. — low prices, but limited selection/quality)
o Farm and outdoor stores (Fleet Farm, Cabella's, etc. — limited selection, but usually sturdy, decent-quality jackets)
o Independent coat or leather goods stores (large selections, often have markdowns/sales; quality can vary widely)
o Independent boutiques (unique selections; tend to have better service and quality)
o Bespoke tailors (custom design and construction)
o Online (you send your measurements and payment; they ship you the jacket — can require several back-and-forth shipments to get fit right)

_____**Step 4: Go Shopping**

_____Head to your target store or stores (see step 3)

_____Identify the jackets that fit your selected description (see step 2)

_____Within that selection, find the coats that fit your measurements (step 1)

With the information in this checklist, you should be able your selection down to just a few jackets. Find the one that suits you best at the price you like — or move on, if you need to, and use the same information to shop elsewhere, until you find a purchase you like.