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Have you mastered the French tuck? These people have

Anyone who's anyone now tucks a bit of their top in at the front and lets it hang loose at the back, says **Harriet Walker**

Do you French tuck? It might sound like a surgical procedure or Eighties hairstyle, but it's just about the biggest thing happening in fashion. And you don't even need to buy anything new to try it. The Duchess of Sussex does it, so does Emmanuelle Alt, the editor of French *Vogue*. Cate Blanchett and Julianne Moore are doyennes of the look. Ryan Gosling knows his way around one, as does David Beckham — hardly surprising, given that Victoria is a pioneer in the field. Amber Rudd has flirted with it and Theresa May — as with so many things — has tried valiantly, but just missed the mark.

The French tuck — also known as the “fashion tuck”, the “mullet tuck” (for its shape) and the “Vetements tuck” (for the cult label in whose show it originated) — is the art of wearing one's top tucked into one's waistband at the front only, and leaving it to drape at the back.

What began as a finishing touch on the catwalk has with startling rapidity become second nature in male and female dressing habits around the world. When a friend mentioned her French tuck over lunch last weekend, nobody queried it. In fact, the men in the room revealed they did it too.

Items sell out and garments take hold in the popular consciousness, but this level of clamour over a simple styling quirk is new. The last trend I recall having such universal appeal — ageless, genderless, classless — was skinny jeans.

The French tuck owes some of its ubiquity — and its name — to the Netflix series *Queer Eye*, in which five gay men travel around the southern states of America, sprucing up the wardrobes and worldviews of soft-on-the-inside hillbillies. The stylist Tan France, a Doncaster-born Muslim with Manhattan polish, encourages his protégés to use the French tuck as a means of smartening up their act without looking too stuffy. Whether or not he was aware of the phrase's other dictionary definition when he coined it — the French tuck is also common practice among drag queens — is up for debate.

The tuck has also gained traction on Instagram; it's the preferred mode for insouciant influencer poses. In fact,



From top: Julianne Moore; Theresa May; Gigi Hadid. Right: model Martha Hunt; actress Jenna Dewan

its just-running-out-the-door effortlessness belies how hard it is working as part of your outfit.

“What it does visually depends on how it's done,” says the stylist and expert body-mapper Anna Berkeley. “If it's asymmetrical it can slice into a bigger tummy and make it appear smaller. Doing it diagonally into a high waistband can also detract from a long body and draw attention to the waist. If you just tuck in the front and leave it hanging at the back, it can minimise a large bottom and add shape to a flat one.”

As someone back at her desk after maternity leave, but not quite back into her old clothes, I can attest to the power of the tuck to tidy and visually blur what Insta-mums refer to as the “pooch”, the stubborn area that once housed a growing human. A 360-degree tuck serves to highlight the bulge, whereas front-only has a near-Photoshop effect.

For all these reasons and more, the street-style crowd and the front row have been working this look for several seasons already: shirt-tails pushed into jeans, T-shirts draped just so over suit trousers, jumpers into elasticated trackpants, even chunky knits hooked over the top of a pleated midiskirt. There's a taxonomy of tucks that also includes a coat tuck (self-explanatory), a

half-tuck (one shirt-tail in, one out) and a double tuck (two layers), as well as the status tuck, a competition among the skinny to see who has the most room in their waistband. Status tuckers will go as far as doing it with a puffer jacket just to prove they can.

Street-stylers and Insta-stars have long been competitive about inventing and patenting styling tics as a means of creating a signature look. On the pavements outside the shows, “shoulder-robing” coats without using the sleeves, wrapping straps of handbags around the wrists and wearing cuffs so long they hide your hands are rife, but — unsurprisingly perhaps — none has taken off the way the French tuck has.



It's the perfect halfway house between scruffy and starchy

“I didn't really know tucks were worthy of attention before I started working at *Vogue*,” says the magazine's fashion features editor, Ellie Pithers. “My colleagues quickly schooled me in the art. I find that wearing a slightly shorter men's shirt and tucking in the front makes you look less rumpled.”

The French tuck represents the perfect halfway house between scruffy and starchy — a balance that non-corporate workers and weekend dads have been striving to reach for decades. Such is its dominance at the moment, the Spanish label Loewe has even started making its shirt-tails slightly shorter on one side, all the better to tuck.

GREGORY PACE; BROADIMAGE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

If a baby's on the way, reach for the preg-heels By Hilary Rose

It's easy to blame Kim Kardashian for everything, so let's do that. Let's also blame Amal Clooney, Blake Lively, the Duchess of Cambridge, Victoria Beckham and Beyoncé. Why? Because when it comes to looking good while pregnant, these women have raised the bar into the stratosphere.

Back in the day, you could loosen your waistband and stick your feet up with a packet of Hobnobs. Not any more. Now, bumps are in your face, be they huge (Kardashian), neat (Clooney) or festooned in flowers (Beyoncé). And just when you thought that flaunting your bump was a bad enough prospect, when you're knackered and your ankles are as wide as your calves, along comes something worse: preg-heels. Stilettos for the up-the-duff. Spikes for people who haven't seen their feet since spring.

For a certain type of woman, wearing high heels right up to your due date is almost a badge of honour. Pregnancy might take away your waist, but it needn't take your Manolos. But is it a good idea?

"Heels alter your posture, and when that's coupled with the physiological change in your body during pregnancy, you're much more susceptible to injury," says Junaid Ahmed, senior podiatrist at Feet for Life in London. "When you're pregnant, the body releases a hormone which relaxes the tissues which keep your joints and ligaments stable. That puts more pressure on your joints. When you're wearing heels, there's even more pressure on your back, ankles and knees."

It's early days for the Duchess of Sussex, but the shoe forecast looks high. The woman who hasn't noticeably worn flats since the day she got engaged appears to have no intention of doing so now. While most people would kick off their heels after a flight to Australia, Meghan was still wearing hers to stroll around the garden with her husband.

Hours after the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to Prince Louis, women looked at her in awe as she put her spikes straight back on to pose on the hospital steps. It runs in the family.

Guess who Match these heels to the A-list bump

Her sister, Pippa, went to Princess Eugenie's wedding wearing sky-high stilettos, two days before she went to the delivery suite. Beckham, who famously said she couldn't concentrate in flats, was heavily pregnant when she was invited to Prince William's wedding. Did she think, "Sod it, I'm huge, I might as well wear flats"? She did not. She wore towering platform Louboutins. Robbie Williams posted a picture of his wife, Ayda Field, in stirrups, in the delivery room, wearing 130mm sparkly scarlet Louboutins.

"Heels are bad for the mechanics of the foot," the physiotherapist Dan Boyd says. "It's not a good idea to alter the forces which travel through the only two bits of you that touch the earth."

Heels can cause nerve issues and impingement of the ankle, making it more unstable and increasing the chances of fracture or ligament damage. And they're especially not a good idea when you're pregnant because they tilt the pelvis."

Wearing heels to your due date is a badge of honour

Ahmed argues that shoes with small heels can offer better support than completely flat shoes. Your centre of gravity is off-kilter, he argues, so wearing heels may not be the best way to go. "A lot of women can get away with 2in heels in the first trimester, but after that they should be alternating their footwear."

By the third trimester you shouldn't be wearing heels."

Among the mothers I know, opinion divides. One 5ft friend said that having to wear flats to work when she was pregnant was her worst nightmare. Another recalled running across the office in heels while six months pregnant and falling. She spent the next two weeks bed-bound with damaged pelvic ligaments, which have never fully recovered. However, another friend said wearily that everyone tells you what you should and shouldn't do when you're pregnant. Wearing heels, she says, was her way of saying: "My body, my feet, my life. And they made me feel feminine when I was huge."



E: Blake Lively
D: Kim Kardashian
C: Victoria Beckham
B: Pippa Middleton
A: Amal Clooney

When it comes to your own wardrobe, there's very little that won't work — shirts, blouses, T-shirts and knits into any array of bottom halves — although doing so with anything particularly bulky is best left to the experts and the very thin. If you're attempting the half-tuck with shirt-tails, be sure that the side beneath the buttons, not the holes, is the one that ends up in your waistband.

Key to any tuck is its nonchalance, so even if it takes you ten minutes to perfect yours, be sure it doesn't look that way when you leave the house. It shouldn't be too perfect or pressed in place; drape and movement are part and parcel of the look.

There are, I suspect, plenty of sceptics among you who will refuse to countenance this on grounds of sloppiness and, even now, contravening the school rules that made you who you are today. I respect that. For some, proper tucking is the last line of defence against civil unrest. In 2010 Sussex police were given a manual on how correctly to handle their shirt-tails. In 2000 the Royal Mail spent £20,000 on a survey to root out untidy tucks among its postmen. It's unlikely that the French tuck will take off in the City, even after Brexit.

Most tellingly, perhaps, Meghan reverted from French tuck to full tuck after joining the Firm. After all, somebody has to maintain standards.