

# HOUSTON TRADITIONAL KILTMAKERS EST 1909

## KILT ETTIQUETTE GUIDE



Kilts can be a tricky business, especially if you have never worn Highland wear before! There are various styles of Highland wear which can be worn for dress, day or casual wear. To make sure you get everything just right read our kilt etiquette guide for information on tartans as well as advice on what to wear and how to wear it.

## Who is entitled to wear a kilt?



One question we constantly get asked is: who is entitled to wear a kilt? Is it only for Scots or people with Scottish ancestors?

**Answer:** Anybody can wear a kilt!

Almost every country in the world has got some sort of tartan link. In England you have Cornish, Northumberland and Manx (Isle of Man) tartans.

The Irish tartans consist of county tartans such as Ulster, Co. Mayo, Galway and Kildare and the Irish national tartan. We also have lots of Welsh tartans.

Over the past 400 years Scots have travelled the world reaching every corner of the globe. They have fulfilled a rich diversity of trades and professions including traders, missionaries, engineers, doctors, teachers, naturalists and inventors to name only a few.

Within Europe many French, Spanish, Italian and German families have Celtic roots and are often of Scottish decent; whilst further afield there is a strong Scottish connection within America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Russia.

We export to every country in the world from the United States to the Falkland Isles.

# Tartan

## What tartan can I wear?

Most customers will choose a clan tartan based on a family name. This could be either a person's own surname or that of a parent or grandparent.

However; you can wear any tartan for any occasion.

Traditionally hunting, ancient and weathered tartans were worn with tweeds and day jackets for outdoor functions, hunting and highland games. Dress and modern tartans were worn with formal functions and black tie dinners.

### Variations of MacDonald Tartan



*Modern*

*Ancient*

*Weathered/muted*

*Hunting*

*Dress*

Nowadays people tend to choose tartan for its aesthetic value, a family or clan connection; or to coordinate with wedding colours.



## *Bute Tartan Range*



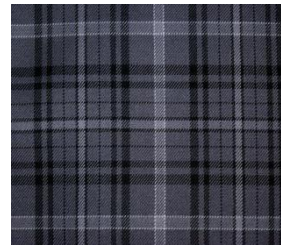
*Ancient Bute*



*Modern Bute*



*Autumn Bute*



*Grey Bute*



*Black Bute*



*Midnight Bute*



*Midnight Bute*



*Weathered Bute*



*Glencallum Bute*



*Straad Bute*



*Scottish Heather*



*St Mirren*

If you do not have family or clan tartan to choose from you can choose a tartan that anyone can wear. You can choose from a range of national tartan such as Scottish National or American National. Often over the years one has heard people explaining they have the right or that they are entitled to wear this or that tartan.... in fact no such right, in any legal sense, exists for them or anyone else ....the only considerations which govern the wearing of a particular set are usage and good taste (quote from Scottish Tartans Authority director Brian Wilton). Nowadays people tend to choose a tartan to coordinate with wedding or colours or purely for its aesthetic value. Greys in particular are currently in vogue and very popular amongst kilt buyers. Pictured above is Houston's own Bute Heather Tartan Designs which are predominantly woven in greys, purples and blues. There are only a few hundred tartans that are privately owned and require permission to be worn.

## **Weights of tartans**

**19 oz** kilts are generally for regimental wear but are available in around six tartans.

**16 oz/17oz** kilts are the largest range available with a choice of around 14,000 tartans. Heavy weight kilts are the best as the kilt sits and swings better. Heavy weight tartans can also be Teflon coated making them stain proof. Contrary to popular belief, heavy weight kilts are not any warmer than medium or lightweight kilts. It is in fact the top half of your outfit such as your jacket and waistcoat that generate heat. The majority of jackets are heavy weight however; Houston's have perfected their own super light weight jacket which has a great cut and comfortable fit.

**13oz** Medium weight kilts are normally produced for Irish and Welsh national tartans. Medium weight kilts come in a choice of around 1000 tartans

**11oz** light weight cloth would normally be woven for ladies skirts, gents' trousers and waistcoats, children's kilts, children's trousers and ties. Kilts do not have a hem around the bottom of the garment however; children's kilts can be cut for growth. A hem of around 2 to 3 inches will be added, and can then be let down when the child grows a bit taller.

**8 oz** fabric is used to make coordinating ties or bow ties and also ladies dresses.

**Wool**, like the 11oz lightweight cloth can be used for ladies and gents' trousers and waistcoats.

**Silk** is available in 80 tartans and can be used to make ties, bow ties, waistcoats and ladies dresses.

**Cotton and Poly Cotton** can be used to make napkins and shirts.

**Poly Viscose** is a washable and stained proof fabric generally used for school uniforms and children's highland wear.

## Teflon Coating



At Houston's we were the first to Teflon coat/stain proof all our tartans, which makes our kilts and jackets fully protected from rain and stains. The fabric is even beer proof! The wool has the same handle and is fully breathable, making them safe to wear to rugby and football matches.

We calculate that over the life span of your kilt you will save approximately £180 to £260, not having to get your kilt dry cleaned as often. This also helps the environment. The Teflon coating lasts a minimum of 18 dry cleans.

## Samples and Swatches

If you would like a sample or swatch of tartan we offer these free of charge to customers. If you live locally there will be no charge for postage. If you live overseas there will be a charge of £5.00 GBP for postage as we ship thousands overseas. If you proceed to order from Houston's this amount will be deducted from your final cost. We would also suggest that if a colour has already been chosen for the theme of a wedding e.g. if the colour pink has been chosen for the bridesmaids dresses it is helpful to bring a sample of the fabric into the store when inquiring about hiring or buying for the event.

This allows Houston's to show you the best coordinating tartans and furthermore, give you the option to have ties made to coordinate with your chosen colours.

## **The Reputable Mills**

At Houston's we tailor our kilts from pure wool tartans woven by Scotland's top quality, reputable mills. We have all mass produced tartans by Lochcarron, House of Edgar, Strathmore, Bute Mill, Martin Mills, Batley & Dalglish in 250 swatch book forms available to view in store.

## **Kilt Yardage**

The traditional 8 yard kilt is the standard measure of gents' kilts. The kilt sits high on the waist, a couple of inches above the hip bone. This would be worn for formal occasions, and it is recommended that the 8 yard kilt be woven in a 170z heavy weight fabric as this sits and swings better when worn. Some men's kilts are still woven in 6 yards of cloth however 8 yards is the standard measurement for gents. 6 yard kilts are now more commonly made for women's kilts.

# Jackets

## PRINCE CHARLIE

Prince Charlie jackets are worn to dress occasion such as black tie dinners, balls, graduations and weddings. It is traditionally worn with a 3 button waistcoat with a black bow tie and a white standard or wing collar pleat front shirt. Alternatively it can be worn with a plain black or white front shirt, with double cuff and cufflinks.

The Prince Charlie jacket traditionally comes with shiny buttons and the silver wear to match however; antique buttons and silver wear have of late become more popular.

The jacket is more popularly worn with a spread bat wing shirt or a standard collar, plain front shirt in white or black with a plain or tartan ruche cravat. It can be worn with either a 3 or a 5 button waistcoat however; we recommend a 3 button waistcoat with tartan ruches.

Prince Charlie jackets must be worn with dress sporrans and black or off white kilt hose or tartan hose. We strongly recommend you wear a belt and buckle as if you take your waist coat and jacket off for dancing you will not be properly dressed without a belt and buckle. Therefore we offer this as an option. A ruche tie should **NOT** be worn with a small wing collar shirt as the wings are too small.

**Please Note:** We do have some dark navy jackets with shiny buttons that look best with modern, dark, navy tartans to be worn with navy or off white kilt hose.





## ARGYLL OR BRAEMARS

The Argyll or Braemar are general jackets for any occasion, with shiny, antique or black button options. They are suitable for weddings, dinners, balls, graduations, christenings, burns suppers, highland games, ceildhies, garden parties, funerals and general day wear.

Both can be worn with a plain tie or tartan tie (with or without a waist coat) or for evening wear with a bow tie (with or without a waist coat). With a ruche cravat a five button waist coat must be worn.



*Argyll*

Argyll or Braemar can be worn with a black or white plain front shirt with a double cuff and cufflinks, with ruches or long ties. Bow ties must be worn with a pleat, front wing or standard collar shirt depending on the occasion. Ruche cravats worn with plain, standard or spread wing shirts must be worn with a waistcoat. Dress or semi dress sporrans can be worn or alternatively for a day event a leather sporran can be worn. Either black, off white, tartan or coordinating colour hose should be worn with your outfit.



*Braemar*

## TWEED BRAEMAR

These jackets are for day/casual events, weddings, highland games, funerals, etc. Jackets should be worn with plain, tweed or tartan ties or ruche cravats, with optional five button waistcoat.

For some weddings spread bat wing shirts can be worn with a ruche cravat. We recommend you wear a semi dress, day or dress sporran depending on your shirt and tie option. When choosing your hose you must pick a colour similar to that of your jacket for example you may choose grey or black if your shirt and sporran are black. Off white hose must **NEVER** be worn with a tweed jacket.



## SHERRIFMUIRS, REGULATION doublets, MONTROSE, KENMORE doublets.

These should be worn for the same occasions as a Prince Charlie jackets and a jabot shirt and cuffs, or a tunic granddad collar shirt or alternatively a spread bat wing and ruche cravat.



## JACOBITE



Jacobite jackets and waistcoats can only be worn with Jacobite shirts. These are considered to be casual outfits.

## SPORRANS



*Day*

*Semi Dress*

*Dress*

*Specialist Fur*

For general dress occasions a semi dress or dress sporran should be worn for day wear either a day or semi dress sporran.

Your sporran should always be centered on the front of the kilt. The only exception to this is when dancing with a partner. The sporran should then be worn to the side upon the hip so not to damage a ladies dress.

## SGIAN DUBH

Sgian dubhs are to be placed in outside of right sock, showing only one inch of the sgian dubh. When entering company, raise the sgian dubh to about two inches above the top of the sock. This is to show that you are still partly armed when everyone sees you. There after you should once again conceal your sgian dubh so only one inch is visible.



## HOSE



When choosing hose you are best to select a colour that complements and coordinates with the tartan or jacket. Traditional colours are off white, black or navy. Grey should be worn with a grey tweed jacket.



## GARTER FLASHES



Garter flashes are used to keep your socks up. However; in olden days showing your tie or flash symbolised a single status letting ladies know you were available. Flashes that were tucked away were symbolic of married men and men who were courting.

## PLAIDS



Shoulder plaids can be worn with dress jackets for weddings. They can be worn for photos then removed and put on top of the top table or cake table for decoration. Piper plaids must only be worn with Montrose or piper doublets.

## DRESS CODE

Suggested dress code by De Bretts should be included on the bottom of invitations, as both ladies and gentleman will want to dress in accordance with your suggested dress code. This will often be dependent on the wedding venue. It should be noted on the invitation if you wish ladies to wear a hat. Below is a description of men's dress.



**Highlandwear:** either; day, day/tweed, dress, black tie/evening wear or white tie.

OR

**Morning Wear:** We suggest not mixing morning wear with highland wear.

Therefore; if you wear morning wear you should incorporate a tartan tie, ruche or hanky to pull together your outfit and coordinate it with the other guests wearing highland wear.

OR



**Lounge Suits**

OR

**Black Tie**, is either Highland Wear or Black Evening Suits

OR

**Smart Casual**

## **BEST MAN DUTIES**

Best man duties include looking after the groom before, during and after the wedding. Duties also include organizing the hires of outfits for the groomsmen. This includes fittings, collection and return of hires, etc.

## FURTHER HELP AND INFO



Owner of Houston's Ken MacDonald has had his own kilt for over 30 years and it is well maintained due proper care and storage.

For further information on tartans as well as advice on what to wear and how to wear it please view our helpful video clips at [www.kiltmakers.com/tv/](http://www.kiltmakers.com/tv/)