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What's the right style of jeans for a man in his forties?

Much as the great white shark has evolved into nature's perfect eating machine, in sartorial matters, the basic design of the blue jean is beyond reproach. Stylistic flairs such as whiskered crotches, acid washes, factory-made tears, and low-rise waists, however, are not, and avoiding them is an excellent start when purchasing a new pair. Focus instead on the criteria below, and develop a rotation, sporting your ratty college-era jeans while gardening and couch surfing, and reserving sleeker styles for dining out or working.

FIT: Many guys wear jeans two sizes too big and cinch the waist with a belt, creating a kangaroo pouch in the front. Your jeans should ride on your hips, never below, with the waistline about two inches below your belly button. A straight-leg cut is the most flattering for most guys, and Prada, Rogan, and Levi's Capital E all have excellent versions in their lines. Relaxed-cut jeans are better for guys with chunkier thighs; just be sure they aren't too roomy. Your belt should be more substantial than those you wear with suits, but not so elaborate that it draws attention to your groin.

COLOR: Dark washes with minimal distressing make the most sense for the office and look better with a collared shirt and jacket. I also like to add a pocket square for some Old World elegance. Hard-core denim aficionados wear rigid or untreated denim from brands such as Evisu and Ksubi. The idea is to break in your jeans like a baseball mitt and earn the wrinkled, vintage look. Too extreme? Another option is to buy designs that are already slightly "broken in" to begin with, and then dry-clean them to preserve the original color and avoid shrinkage.

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JEAN TIPS: Dry-clean your denim to slow the aging process.
Clothing by Prada.

WHERE TO BUY? SEE PAGE 150

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