

What to Wear

The various SCA activities (populace meetings, demos and events) are held "in garb". This means that members wear clothes made like those from the Middle Ages. It is generally suggested that you begin at first with a simple outfit (although some folks do "jump in with both feet" and make fancier garb from the beginning...the choice is up to you).

You will note that we refer to our medieval apparel as garb, attire, outfits or clothes, rather than costumes. The reason for this is best explained through a quote from Baroness Briana MacKorkhill, "There is a definite difference between costumes and clothes. Costumes are usually created for a visual effect only and don't always include all the under-layers. (Theatrical costumes usually fall into this category.) They don't tend to last as long, showing age and wear quickly. Without the support of the under-layers, they tend to have more stress points, which leads to this wear. After being worn for a while, they begin to look like a Halloween costume. Clothes are more substantial. They are constructed so you could wear them every day. The garment has a longer life because it has the support of the under-layers. This takes a little more research, and care in construction, but the results are more durable. Finishing is everything."

Helpful Clothing Hints

One of the simplest to make or obtain is the all-purpose T-tunic and a pair of pants. These are stylish, useable by both men & women and were known throughout almost all of the Middle Ages. Whether you start with simple garb or more elaborate clothes, there are various resources available to provide you with information on medieval clothing. Some on-line web-pages to assist you are:

Briana's Clothing Page

<http://www.modaruniversity.org/briana/Briana3.htm>

Basic T-Tunic

http://web.archive.org/web/20091027115522/http://geocities.com/hansensmtn/toby/basic_tunic.htm

Simple Pants

http://web.archive.org/web/20091027115523/http://geocities.com/hansensmtn/toby/simple_pants.htm

Introduction to Garb

http://www.virtue.to/articles/in_depth_garb.html

Wardrobes of the Knowne World Unlock'd

<http://sca-garb.freesevers.com/articles/index.html>

SCA-Garb Links

<http://sca-garb.freesevers.com/articles/howtolinks.html>

Note A good source for trews (simple pants) is to purchase medical scrub pants (the kind that have a draw-sting-tie). These pants are almost virtually identical to one type of pants from period, and they come in a wide variety of colors.

Concerning Textiles – when selecting the fabric for your garb, look at cottons, linens, wools and fabrics with a homespun look. Corduroy (particularly "no wale" and "fine wale") and drapery/upholstery fabric can also make good material for types of garb. Avoid spandex, nylon knits, & double-knits and latex-backed fabrics.

Concerning Colors – when first starting out, it is generally advised that you avoid patterned fabrics until you have had time to research the types of patterns used in our time period. Solid color fabrics came in a wide variety of hues in the Middle Ages, due to the large number of dyes available. The colors ranged from the bright heraldic shades through muted colors and earth tones, including dusty rose, moss green, light blue, russet, a whole gamut of browns, greys, dark greens and beiges.

Concerning Trim – one of the aspects of medieval garb that you should not overlook is trim. Bright colored trim or edging was added whenever possible. Even simple garments would have trim around the neckline, and usually on the sleeves near or at the cuffs. Sometimes trim was also added at or near the hem or bottom edge of clothes. An excellent source for purchasing trim is Calontir Trim, which sells trim at various events and on-line at: <http://www.calontirtrim.com/>

Accessories

Accessorizing completes an outfit. The addition of items such as belts, pouches, gloves and jewelry helps to complete “the look” of one’s attire. Hats and other head coverings are definitely important; throughout a lot of the Middle Ages, keeping one’s head covered was the norm. There is a wide variety of types and styles of medieval headwear. A starting point for information on medieval headwear is located at: <http://www.modaruniversity.org/Hats.htm>

Another important area is footwear. It’s important to take care of your feet, but you want to look good also. To begin with choose either plain leather boots or simple slippers (the Chinese plain cloth ones work well) or moccasins with no fringe. These are close to some period styles. Later, you can purchase or make more authentic footwear. A couple of resources for making shoes are:

Simple Medieval Shoes: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~chrisandpeter/shoe/construction.html>

Poulaines, Easy Pointy Shoes: <http://www.virtue.to/articles/poulaines.html>

Footwear of the Middle Ages: <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/shoe/SHOEHOME.HTM>

Clothing Customs and Sumptuary Laws

Finally, you need to be aware of a few customs and traditions concerning what is worn. Many of these are based on medieval practices known as sumptuary laws (regulations of certain pieces of apparel or regalia). The following items are reserved for use until you have received the awards or honors that bestow the right to wear them.

Headwear

Crowns, coronets, chaplets (wreaths) of roses, tiaras, and ornate circlets (metallic or leather headbands) are reserved for nobility. You ~CAN~ wear a circlet of any metal (or leather) that has no protrusions above or below the band, has no decoration on the band and the band must not exceed ½-inch in height. Cloth bands for hats are not restricted.

Belts & Baldrics

White belts are reserved for Knights and white baldrics are reserved for Masters-of-Arms. No one else should utilize them. Also, by tradition, certain colored belts have designated a specific relationship; a red belt signifies the wearer is a squire (associated to a Knight), a green belt signifies the wearer is an apprentice (associated to a Laurel) and a yellow belt signifies the wearer is a protégé (associated to a Pelican). It is suggested that you avoid wearing these colors of belt unless you have such an association.

Cloaks

The use of ermine fur (or any design that gives the appearance of ermine fur) for the trim or lining of cloaks is reserved for the Royalty and the Peers of the Society. Any other type of fur or design on a cloak is allowed.

Jewelry

Plain, unadorned chains (especially gold ones) are reserved for Knights. No one else should utilize them. Additionally restricted are Collars of Estate. These are elaborate collars (usually made of metal plates or cast symbols) that display awards and orders (and many times the kingdom’s symbol). These are reserved for Nobles and Bestowed Peers.

Footwear

Spurs (especially gold ones) are reserved for Knights. No one else should utilize spurs unless they are involved in an equestrian event, where their use is required. The spurs should be removed when not involved in such activities.

Badges

There are certain symbols registered to various Offices and award Orders. No one should display or wear these symbols unless they hold the Office or belong to the Order the symbol is registered to.