

St. Ives' Costuming Guidelines

as of March, 2006



St. Ives represents the emerging English middle class. Because Elizabethan people were class conscious it is important that you dress in a manner that is appropriate to your status. We are also performing for an audience and good design is an important part of our show. Key things to consider are silhouette and scale. To help you achieve this goal, St. Ives has developed some costuming ground rules. We also have an official Ives Costume Tsar who can help you with design and construction questions.

It is important to remember that your costume must be approved by the Head of Costuming, Frieda Paras-Jones, before you can perform at Faire. You will be required to model your entire costume, including jewelry, shoes and accessories at costume approval. If your costume is not right, or you do not have essential parts of it with you, you will NOT pass. REC is trying to achieve a very specific look and although you may find source materials contrary to what is listed below, this is what you need to get approved for Big Faire. This list is not all-inclusive; there are some characters that will require something different than what you see here. If you're not sure, ask your Head of Household for guidance.

Before you invest in fabric and lots of time, consult with the Ives Costume Tsar who can guide you on the path to success and happiness. At least in terms of your clothes.

Our Look

Women

All women must wear a Spanish, French, or doublet style bodice (no off the shoulder or under-the-bust styles). For the middle class, the bodice must lace either on the side or in the back. Doublet style bodices fasten at the center front, but should fasten with hooks and eyes or buttons. If your character is lower middle class or a servant center front lacing is fine. A surcote is acceptable by special permission ONLY.

It is preferred that upper middle class ladies wear hoops. Women's hoop sizes should be no larger

than 90 to 115 inches in circumference. A petticoat over your hoops to disguise the boning lines is strongly recommended unless you want us to make lampshade jokes.

And last but not least, remember Frieda's motto--- Semper Ubi Sub Ubi (always wear underwear)! Every lady should wear bloomers or drawers. No, bloomers are not period, but we'd rather see your bloomers than the alternative if your dress flips up.

Men

Men must wear a doublet or jerkin and short breeches to the knees. Men's breeches come in many flavors. They can be plain or paned and you will need to wear tights or stockings to cover your legs. Breeches that are open at the bottom are gallagaskins and, while period, are not appropriate for men of your station. Whenever possible men's costumes should have a codpiece. After all, you need a way to keep your pants closed.

All

Hat: Everyone MUST wear a hat at all times. Hats can be fabric (flat caps and the like), straw, felt, or a buckram-type structure (tall hat, riding hat, French hood). Women must have their hair covered with a muffin cap, biggins or snood in addition to a hat.

Shoes: You will be outdoors on rocky, uneven ground most of the time; invest in a pair of good, sturdy shoes. Those who have done Faire over the years will attest that plain leather shoes with a low heel work best for the terrain. NO China slippers. They are very flimsy and give no

protection to your feet. Tennis shoes, cowboy boots, or open-toe shoes of any kind are never allowed. Mary Jane-style shoes, short or tall boots (no fringe) clogs or leather walking shoes are good candidates.

Sleeves: You must have them and this includes the lower middle class. This is a theatrical choice to separate and slightly elevate us from the other guilds and booth workers. You can wear them open for comfort, but you need to have them.

Fasteners: All grommets must be couched. That is hand-sewing a layer of embroidery floss around and through to hide the metal of the grommet. Metal grommets on leather are the only exception. Be sure to use proper laces such as woven or leather cords for tying up bodices and jerkins; in other words, no obvious shoelaces.

Footwear: Stockings or hose are mandatory (as well as sanitary) and must reach to at least the knee. Bare leg flesh should never be exposed.

Fabrics

We strongly advise that you get swatches approved before you buy your fabric or finalize your design.

Whenever possible, try to use 100% natural fabrics (silk, wool, linen and cotton). Synthetic fabrics are plastic and don't breathe. Bad idea when you spend a lot of time in the sun.

Because we are going with a "rich, but not too rich" look, try to use fabrics with as much woven texture as you can find. Using textured fabrics gives your costume depth.

Acceptable fabrics include woven cottons, duck, linen, wool, or leather. If you're playing upper middle class, raw silk, brocade, damask, tapestry, and cotton velveteen (i.e., not shiny) are acceptable in small amounts depending on our character's station. Corduroy or blue denim will not pass.

If the fabric you are considering has a pattern, make sure that the pattern is part of the weave, not printed on top. Tapestry in this period is

geometric (repeating) only -- no Victorian-type floral patterns are passable.

Questions? Doubts? Bring a swatch to your friendly neighborhood Costume Tsar before you buy.

Colors

Elizabethans only had vegetable and mineral dyes available to them. Because of this our choices include earth tones, jewel tones, brown, rust, green, yellow, tan, blue, burgundy, beige, gray, dark rose, subdued oranges, and darker reds. Fluorescents, pastels, and bright colors are not acceptable. Purple of any kind will not pass. No one in St. Ives may wear all black. This is a theatrical choice so that we will not be confused with the nobility or Puritans.

Partlets, chemises and shirts

Bright white was very expensive to maintain, so use it only for upper middle class ladies' partlets, chemises and men's shirts. Off-white (unbleached) is also good for partlets, chemises and shirts. Neither should be used for the main body of your costume. Colored or all-black partlets are not acceptable. You can use blackwork to trim your collars and cuffs, depending on the station of your character. Use wooden, leather or metal buttons or grosgrain or fabric ties for closures. Aglets are a nice way to finish off ribbon or cloth ties.

Lower middle class: Ladies' chemises and men's shirts may be various colors. Black should not be used.

Trim

Grosgrain or embroidered ribbon and woven trim are always best, and bias tape can also be used. Avoid shiny or plastic-looking trims and don't use satin ribbon. Braiding, cording and piping are great embellishments.

Buttons may be metal, corded, cloth-covered, leather, bone, or horn. A word to the wise: plastic buttons that look like metal break - a lot. Buttons that are attached through the holes in the button

are not historically correct for outerwear applications. The kind you want attach through hoop on the underside (shanked).

Lace can be used in small amounts depending on your character's station, subject to approval. It should look handmade. Remember that lace was a luxury item - you will only want to use it if you are going for an upper-middle class look. Use cotton lace, not polyester or metal thread.

Accessories that might be useful

A goblet, mug, or tankard is essential to Basic Faire Survival. It should be made of wood, metal

or pewter.

A belt, simply made, with a pass-through buckle is vital. You can hang all sorts of stuff on it; a bag to hold your stuff, a mug hanger to hold your mug/goblet or any other vital tchotchkes that need to be on hand

Women might find that having a small basket to cart things around is awfully handy. Hat pins are good for keeping that pesky hat on in high winds.

Suspenders for britches and heavy skirts are enormously helpful and should never be visible.

Additional Resources

Your best resource for the rules *as they apply to the Renaissance Faire* is [Elizabethan Costuming for the Years 1550-1580](#), Janet Winter and Carolyn Schultz.

For real period research and greater accuracy, try these references:

[20,000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment](#), Francois Boucher

[Costume Reference: Tudors and Elizabethans No. 2](#), Marion Sichel

[Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c.1560-1620](#), Janet Arnold

[Period Costume for Stage & Screen: Patterns for Women's Dress 1500-1800](#), Jean Hunnisett

[Tailor's Pattern Book 1589](#), [FACSIMILE] Juan De Alcega, J. L. Nevinson (Translator), Jean Pain (Translator), Cecilia Bainton (Translator)