



Women's Clothing Guidelines

This list is intended as a guide to assembling a reasonably accurate kit for a Highland woman circa the year 1745. It is not the last word on the subject - there are probably sources for patterns or ready-made items that are not listed. Please see the Suppliers List for other sources.

We recognize that few, if any, people will ever achieve the "Most Accurate" level in all areas of their kit. This page is designed to provide a "Good, Better, Best" structure so that you will have an idea of what will get you in the door with a reasonably good outfit, as well as goals to strive for as you seek to improve your impression. Every effort should be made to have acceptable kit within your first year. We have loaner gear and you can borrow clothing while you are putting together your kit. We would rather that you get something that is right than waste money on items you can't use!

First Things First:

Your basic items of clothing are: Shift, Petticoats (2), stays, jacket or shortgown, neckerchief, kertch or cap. Next, get your shoes, stockings, apron, pockets, and arisaid.

Hints and Tips:

- DO wear more than one petticoat (which, in this context, means a skirt, not an undergarment). This gives the proper 18th c. silhouette, which makes the waist look narrow by contrasting it with the fullness of the skirts. (Yes, this does work!)
- DO wear jumps or stays, unless you're a nursing mother or wetnurse, elderly and poor, an invalid, or a slattern. Most other women, even working-class women like dairy maids, seem to have worn stays; otherwise they would have given the impression of being "loose" (which is where the term comes from -- there was a strong connection in this period between neat dress and good behavior). No, we don't know for certain that Scottish women wore jumps or stays; however, nobody says they didn't, and most European women were wearing them by this period.
- PLEASE cover your hair, unless you are a single young woman. There's nothing that ruins a period impression faster than a modern hairdo. Even if you are tucking all your hair into a cap and putting a straw hat on top, that's much better than ruining your impression with a modern haircut.

- PLEASE wear period glasses or contacts. Yes, reproduction glasses frames can be expensive, but that's often another area where reenactors fall short. If you can't, get thin metal or frameless glasses, which are fairly inobtrusive.

-- PLEASE borrow, buy or make period footwear -- pampooties are cheap to make, and more accurate than Ren-Faire shoes.

-- Lastly, DO look at pictures that date from Europe in the middle of the 18th century -- look at what women were wearing, and how, to get a feel for what an accurate costume would look like. Though there are very few such pictures of Scottish women, we do have some of English and French country women, and those can serve as a guide, with a little pinch of salt to account for context and the difference between those countries and Scotland. Scotland was NOT completely isolated from fashion trends -- they just took a little longer to get there.

To be avoided:

- PLEASE do not wear modern makeup. Sunscreen is encouraged, but eyeliner, mascara and lipstick are obviously modern and should be omitted.
- "Circle" mob caps (i.e., mob caps made from a gathered circle of fabric with a drawstring) are NOT correct. They are not based on any 18th c. historical object.
- The "English Bodice" or "French Bodice" as worn by many reenactors are not based on any historical garment. There was a waistcoat-like jacket that was worn in the bedroom, or around the house by invalids or nursing mothers. Unless you are in your bedroom, or your house in one of these states, don't wear one. Also to be avoided: Ren-Faire bodices in tapestry or cut under the breast; they're not accurate either in materials or cut.
- Stay away from prints unless you are very confident that they're period. Most of the calico prints available in commercial fabric stores are inaccurate and are more appropriate for Victorian day-dresses than 18th c. clothing.
- Penannular brooches should not be worn; nor should you be wearing the big, silver Victorian brooches with the stones on them. There are no existing penannular brooches dating from later than about 1100 AD. Unfortunately, there are few jewelers making any accurate annular brooches for women (a few people making moderately acceptable annular brooches are listed below). If you don't have an annular brooch, a straight iron, wood or bone pin would be a better choice; you use it to pin on your arisaid like one would use a straight pin. Just be careful not to stick yourself with the pointy end; if you tuck the sharp end into a fold of cloth after using it to pin the arisaid, that helps.
- Modern jewelry should be omitted
- Iron Age Celtic jewelry such as torcs should be omitted

Item	Most Accurate	Good	Minimum Acceptable	Unacceptable	Reccomended Patterns
Shift (aka "Sark")	100% linen, white or natural handstitched period pattern thread buttons or ribbon ties (if any) on sleeve cuffs	100% linen, machine sewn, hand finished, white or natural	100% linen, machine sewn, white or natural	cotton, colored fabrics, prints, polyester or poly/cotton ruffles, lace at neckline and cuffs (except for fancy dress, please ask about lace patterns) draw-string-gathered "bag-sleeve" leine	Kannik's Korner Women's Shift pattern JP Ryan Six Piece Wardrobe Also see Shift instructions Burnley & Trowbridge William Booth Draper 96 District Fabrics
Stays	linen with metal, basket cane, or broom boning linen or tape lacing leather or tape binding hand-sewn linen or wool-covered "Jumps" - lightly boned stays	linen, cotton drill, or fustian with "German whalebone", 1/4" steel or basket cane boning machine-sewn	Sports bra may be worn under shortgown for very lower-class impression, but jumps or stays should be worn after your first year in the group	Ren-faire bodices (tapestry or brocade fabrics, metal grommets, cut under the breast) obviously synthetic ribbons synthetic fabrics "English" and "French" bodices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill Farm Jumps pattern • Stays Instructions on MaraRiley.net • J.P. Ryan Stays pattern
Stockings or	100% wool, hand-knit to	machine-knit	machine-knit wool	modern socks	• Kannik's Korner

Cut Hose	period pattern , or cut hose, solid or tartan	wool or cotton stockings over the knee	or cotton stockings over the knee	(below the knee) striped socks (documented only for 18th c. sailors) modern tights (unless worn in cold weather under period stockings) cut hose: cotton flannel, obvious synthetic blends	Accessories pattern • Also see Appin Papers on cut & sewn hose construction
Pockets	linen, hand-sewn hand-woven tape or commercial linen tape drawstring	Linen, machine sewn, machine woven tape drawstring		fur pouch leather RenFaire or other belt pouch sporrans leather over-the-shoulder purses	• Kannik's Korner Accessories pattern JP Ryan Six Piece Wardrobe
Petticoat	100% wool, linen, or linsey-woolsey, hand-sewn stripes, if any, woven into material red or blue wool (possibly with green or other color wool tape band at the hem) were common, as noted by observers	linen, hemp, wool, machine-sewn except for visible stitching tartan petticoats may have been worn, but more documentation is needed	Linen, hemp, or wool machine-sewn	Cotton synthetic materials stripes printed on fabric	• 18CNewEnglandLife petticoat instructions JP Ryan Six Piece Wardrobe

Gown	solid, striped or tartan wool or linen, mid-century "robe a' l'anglaise" style with sewn-down pleats, robings and stomacher hand-sewn	linen, wool, linsey-woolsey machine-sewn except for visible stitching		Cotton, synthetics or synthetic blends	Note: gowns are NOT a beginning seamstress's project!
Jacket / Bedgown	100% wool, linen, hemp or linsey-woolsey hand-sewn tartan or stripes, if any, woven into material	linen, hemp, wool, linsey-woolsey machine sewn except visible stitching	machine-sewn	Cotton, cotton blends, prints rayon and other synthetic fabrics or blends stripes printed onto fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kannik's Korner Manteau de Lit pattern, cut short (wrist length) • JP Ryan jacket pattern • instructions for drafting your own shortgown
Apron	100% linen, hemp or wool white, natural, brown, green, blue or blue simple checks or stripes gathered to self fabric or to cotton or linen tape, with tape ties	linen, hemp, wool, linsey-woolsey machine sewn except visible stitching	machine-sewn	Cotton, synthetics, rayon pinner apron (mostly worn by French, Germans and by children in our period)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18thCNewEnglandLife apron instructions
Arisaid	100% wool, 3 1/2 to 4 yards long, made of 2 widths of 27"-32" fabric (see standards for men's plaids) No pattern necessary; tartans should be of a non-	100% wool one piece, min. 50" wide	good wool/poly blend linen that looks like hard tartan	cotton flannel obviously synthetic fabric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnley & Trowbridge • William Booth Draper • 96 District Fabrics

	graduated pattern, and should not be an easily recognized clan sett. White grounds preferred, if available.				
Belt	<p>brown or black leather</p> <p>17th or 18th c period findings</p> <p>no period examples exist, but they were apparently sometimes decorated with silver plaques; may have been tooled or otherwise decorated</p>	plain black or brown leather with period buckle	plain black or brown leather belt, if hidden under flap of arisaid	<p>Ren-faire belts</p> <p>"Celtic Revival" or Victorian buckles</p> <p>leather in modern chrome-dyed colors like purple, green, etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy period buckle from sutler; straps can be bought from Tandy Leather
Cap (Lowlanders or wealthy Highlanders)	Mid-18 th c pattern, linen, hand-sewn silk or linen ribbons or tapes	Cotton/linen blend	<p>white cotton muslin, machine-sewn</p> <p>head-cloth worn turban-style</p>	<p>circle-drawstring "Mob Cap"</p> <p>synthetic materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kannik's Korner Women's Caps, View A or B • Mill Farm caps pattern, cap 2 or 3
Kertch, neck-handkerchief	<p>Bleached linen, hand-hemmed</p> <p>30-36" square, pinned or tied under chin or at back of neck; probably worn pinned to some kind of cap, coif or cross-cloth underneath - see paintings</p>		Machine sewn	<p>Cotton, synthetic materials, cotton quilt prints, floral prints, etc.</p> <p>bare head on married women</p> <p>unhemmed, too small</p>	

	<p>Kertch is usually white, but sometimes colored; may have simple checks or stripes.</p> <p>Cross-cloth (triangle of white linen with tapes at corners to tie behind head) was possibly worn under kertch</p>				
"Snood"	<p>In Scotland, this "snood" (breid, in Gaelic) referred to a wool or silk ribbon, about an inch wide, worn around the head like a headband, tied at the side or back of the head, by unmarried young women. Unmarried older women would probably wear a kertch.</p>	Cotton twill tape		<p>Obvious synthetic ribbons</p> <p>knitted/crocheted 19th century style hair net snood - an entirely different type of snood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnley & Trowbridge • William Booth Draper • 96 District Fabrics
Pampooties: See Pampooties paper and section in Men's Clothing guidelines	<p>Sheepskin, deer hide (with or without hair)</p> <p>Bare feet are the most accurate, but are not always practical for modern feet</p>	cowhide, sheepskin (without hair)		<p>yellow, obviously chrome-dyed leather</p> <p>sneakers moccasins modern shoes</p> <p>Ren-faire "Celtic shoes" or Smoke &</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucas type 3 and 4 • Irish (Aran) pampootie

				Fire gillies	
Shoes (also see men's clothing guidelines)	<p>Hand-made, squared or semi-rounded toe, 1/2" heel, straight last</p> <p>Pewter, steel, brass buckles or tied with leather thong for more "common" impression (see Penicuik drawings)</p> <p>Brown or black; rough side out probably more common for working-class impression</p> <p>Sarah Juniper Shoes</p>	<p>Burnley & Trowbridge ladies' shoes, either walking shoes or flat</p> <p>Gossville Shoes Flying Canoe (website broken)</p>	<p>Plain black shoes may be worn for first year, but pambooties are cheap and preferable</p> <p>Burnley & Trowbridge mules</p>	<p>combat boots</p> <p>modern shoes</p> <p>Ren-faire boots</p> <p>Birkenstocks</p> <p>sneakers</p> <p>Smoke & Fire gillies</p>	<p>Fugawee shoes are acceptable, but they have a tight toebox so order a full size larger or a wider width</p>
Annular Brooch	<p>Annular brooch, reproduction of period brooch or close facsimile (an annular brooch is a complete circle, not open on one side)</p> <p>Steel, bone or wood bodkin</p> <p>Luckenbooth brooches are acceptable, but try to avoid obvious non-period/Victorian designs</p>			<p>penannular brooch (open on one side; not worn later than about C10th-11th)</p> <p>Victorian or modern "Celtic" pins</p> <p>obviously medieval or Iron Age Celtic pins</p>	<p>• Raymond's Quiet Press brooch #EL-16 or R-23</p>
Jewelry	<p>For juried events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - earrings: small plain hoops, if any. - rings: plain silver or gold band, if any - for poor women, a silk or cotton ribbon, or a glass 			<p>Iron Age "torc" or Celtic jewelry from other periods</p> <p>Victorian or modern jewelry</p>	

	bead choker - for wealthier women, a locket or miniature may be appropriate				
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General Construction Techniques:

	Best	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Sewing thread	all handstitched seams and buttonholes waxed linen thread (linen most common) silk thread on dressy garments	machine-sewn hidden seams hand-stitched visible seams and buttonholes	completely machine-sewn seams & buttonholes cotton hand-quilting thread	metal grommets zippers velcro
Cloth	tartans in non-clan sett linsey-woolsey, plain or striped wool, plain or striped linen, plain or striped		Cotton, cotton blends Synthetics are dangerous around campfires because they melt when they burn	Cotton was available in the 18 th century but was expensive, so probably was not worn widely in the Highlands aside from possibly items such as neck-handkerchiefs and women's pockets Obvious clan tartans should be avoided wherever possible Heavier cottons may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis. See group members for guidance.
Buttons	Shift sleeves: thread-covered buttons	metal-shanked buttons		aluminum or chrome buttons

	metal linked cuff buttons Riding habits: cloth-covered buttons	wood buttons horn buttons		stamped buttons plastic Women's clothes did not use buttons aside from those that were modeled on men's clothing, such as riding habits or waistcoats worn with riding habits.
Sewing on leather	waxed linen thread			nylon thread or monofilament

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General Construction Techniques:

	Best	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Sewing, cloth	all handstitched seams and buttonholes silk, wool or linen thread (linen most common) tartans in non-clan sett	machine-sewn hidden seams hand-stitched visible seams and buttonholes	completely machine-sewn seams & buttonholes cotton thread	metal grommets zippers velcro obvious clan tartans should be avoided whenever possible
Buttons	cloth-covered, horsehair-filled, wood or metal shanks thread-covered buttons	metal-shanked buttons wood buttons horn buttons		aluminum or chrome buttons stamped buttons plastic
Sewing, leather (except shoes)	waxed linen thread		artificial sinew	nylon thread or monofilament

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