

Costume Approval-Overview

The following guidelines and the costume approval process are intended to achieve a unified look in keeping with the artistic vision of the producers and entertainment director of NCRF. The intended look is colorful and festive, covering the broad spectrum of characters found in our Elizabethan village. Ideally, we will achieve a balance of historical accuracy and theatricality that helps transport our visitors to the late 16th Century. Your costume should be character driven, clearly denoting your character's station in life and personality.

When you come for costume approval, please:

- Be wearing your whole costume including all accessories, shoes, jewelry, etc. If your costume has multiple pieces that are interchangeable, please bring your alternate pieces with you. You will not receive final approval if a required piece of your costume is missing.
- Have your costume cleaned and in good repair
- Plan ahead. If you have questions or need help or advise don't leave it to the last minute, you can e-mail me at **ncrfcostumes@gmail.com**
- Have cleared your costume with your guild leadership
- Be prepared to give me a couple of short sentences about your character and your role at the faire

With your help, NCRF will be a beautiful historical and theatrical event. Thank you!

Notes for Everyone

The following guidelines apply primarily to actors portraying working and middle class English folk. All actors should work closely with their guild leadership to make sure than any guild specific costuming requirements beyond those presented here are fulfilled. Actors portraying nobility, foreigners, and Puritans should be associated with the appropriate guild, and will need to clear their costuming with their guild leadership before coming for costume approval. Theme characters will need to clear their costumes with the Entertainment Director before coming for costume approval. Everyone should read the notes in this section.

- **Everyone must wear a shirt, smock, or chemise.** It should have long sleeves.
- **Everyone must wear closed-toe shoes.** The Faire is one big construction site. Both for insurance reasons and for your own safety, we require you to wear shoes. They may be open on the sides, but they must have closed toes. Please consider your activities as well. Backless shoes are not good for dancing.
- **Everyone should wear appropriate headwear.** What is appropriate will vary depending on your character and station, but everyone should have something on their head.
- **A note on feathers: Large ostrich plumes will not be approved on anyone except the Germans, Court, and certain theme or stage show characters.** Shorter ostrich feathers--up to about 5 inches long--may be approvable on tall hats and bonnets for middle class characters. **No ostrich plumes will be approved on straw hats or flat caps.** Please take advantage of the multitude of other lovely feathers available: natural and black dyed cock feathers, turkey feathers, pheasant feathers, etc.
- **Stick with natural fibers:** Linen and tropical weight wool are especially good, but cotton and rayon blended with other natural fibers will work as well. Some silks may also be appropriate, depending on the weave and your character. Please check with your guild leadership and the costume mistress. Polyester, acrylic, and other synthetic fibers are like wrapping yourself in plastic. That will make you unhappy.
- **Fabric:** Velvet, taffeta, satin, and other luxury fabrics, metallic and jeweled trim, etc. will only be approved for actors portraying courtiers. Modern fabrics like seersucker, gingham, Victorian-style floral brocades, and prints are not approvable for anyone.
- **Notes on colors:** All shades of purple are reserved for the Queen. Scarlet is reserved for the Yeoman of the Guard and certain courtiers. Head to toe black is reserved for Puritans and certain courtiers. Individual black pieces may be approvable. Please check with your guild leadership and the costume mistress.

Please avoid true primary colors: royal blue, sunshine yellow, kelly green, etc. Pure, intense colors like this are only achievable with modern dyes and they read very "hard" to the eye. Other colors may be achievable with period dyes, but look modern and are therefore inappropriate theatrically: hot pink or magenta, bright orange, bright turquoise, baby pastels. Modern colors like neons are not approvable.

- Unless you are playing a pirate with an approved pirate group, **horizontal stripes are not approvable.**
- **Any hair that is showing on your head should be a real hair color.** It doesn't have to be YOUR real hair color, but it should be a color that hair comes in naturally.
- **Modern haircuts** should be covered.

- **Tattoos should be covered** either by clothing or by makeup.
- **One earring in each ear, please.** All other piercings should be removed or covered.
- **Sunglasses should not be worn.** Exceptions will be made for medical necessity.
- **Makeup is ok**, but it should be subtle and natural looking. Nail polish should be clear, nude, or not there.
- **Horns and Tails** are not appropriate for anyone.

Working or "Peasant" Class

Most people will be playing working class people or "peasants" in Renaissance faire shorthand. These characters include farm laborers, those who work in animal husbandry, lower servants, and other relatively unskilled or uneducated folks.

Notes for all working and peasant class characters:

Fabrics

- Rougher woven linen, wool, cotton, silk noil, linen/rayon blends
- Flannel, tweedy, twill weaves are all appropriate for outer clothing
- Blue jeans denim is inappropriate.
- Jacquard or tapestry type fabric is inappropriate.
- Velvets and finely woven silks or silk substitutes are inappropriate

Colors

- Earth tones, colors that look slightly softened or faded
- For most colors, a medium to medium-light shade will work best. Some colors are less light-fast than others and can be used in a lighter shade. Yellow, for example, fades quickly when dyed with natural dyes, so you can use butter yellows in addition to the stronger, earthier golds and mustards. Brown can also be hard to keep dark. Avoid really dark browns.
- Blues
 - Gray or green undertones
 - Light navy
 - Cornflower
- Reds
 - Brick
 - Brown or orange undertones
 - Berry
 - Rose
- Greens
 - Olive
 - Forest
 - Apple
 - Sage
 - Gray or blue undertones
- Oranges
 - Red or brown undertones
 - Pumpkin
 - Rust
- Yellows
 - Brown undertones
 - Butter
 - Mustard
 - Gold
- Browns
 - Milk chocolate

- Tan
- Tawny
- Gray, green, or red undertones

Trim

- Should be very simple if any at all
- Try to avoid grosgrain ribbon. It looks very plastic-y and the colors are hard to get right. If you want a premade band of contrasting color, purchased bias tape works better if you are careful about the color.
- Embroidered or jacquard ribbon are inappropriate.
- Satin ribbon is inappropriate
- Lace is inappropriate

Condition of Clothes

- May look well-worn
- Should be neatly mended or patched
- You are playing a working person, so some dirt may be appropriate

Accessories

- Belts
 - Leather, fabric, possibly rope
 - Buckles should be silver or brass toned and a little dull if possible
- Pouches
 - Leather or fabric
 - Any approvable color
- Blades
 - Short eating knives only
 - Stiletos, bodice daggers, long knives, swords, etc. are inappropriate
- Mugs or cups
 - Wood or pottery
 - Possibly well used pewter
- Buttons
 - Wood, bone, clay, fabric, thread covered
- Jewelry
 - Should be very simple
 - Bone, wood, ceramic
 - Simple, silver toned metal
 - One ring on each hand
 - No stones, please.

Women

The Basics

At a minimum you should wear:

- **A smock or chemise**
- **Shoes and socks**

- **2 skirts and a bodice OR**
- **A kirtle (bodice and skirt sewn together-skirt is not open in front) and an underskirt or petticoat**
- **A wreath or hat**

Underwear:

- Smock or Chemise
 - Long sleeves. May be worn rolled up
 - High or low neck. Low neckline may be cut to size or drawstring (elastic is ok as long as it doesn't shout "ELASTIC!" at me)
 - Low necked smocks and chemises must be worn properly on the shoulders
 - May be any approvable solid color.
- Socks
 - Should come up to the knee or over
 - Any approvable color
 - No stripes!
- Bloomers
 - Optional but recommended for modesty and as an anti-chafing measure

Clothing:

- Skirts and Petticoats
 - Should be lower shin to ankle length
 - Can be gathered or pleated to a waistband, drawstring, or elastic
A waistband is recommended for comfort in layering under a bodice
 - Any approvable color
 - Woven vertical stripes may be approvable. Check with your guild leadership and with the costume mistress
- Bodice
 - Should have straps
 - Neckline may be round or square and should be cut no lower than your nipple line
 - Should have only straight seams--no curved princess seams
 - Should be fitted and supportive, but shouldn't hurt you
 - Should lace up the front or sides
 - Should be boned at least along the lacing edges
 - Should reach your natural waist--usually about even with your lowermost rib

Headwear:

- Head linens
 - Include cauls (small circle of fabric gathered to a band that fits around your head), biggins, and kerchiefs
 - Snoods or hairnets may be worn if approvable colors
 - Should be worn under a straw or fabric hat or cap
- Straw hats
 - Should have a fairly shallow crown and a brim
 - Natural colored straw is preferable.
- Flat caps
 - Any approvable color
 - Single color is preferable

- Blocked wool felt
 - Any approvable color
 - May be blocked or simply a blank
- Muffin caps
 - Approvable, but not really a period correct hat. If possible, other choices are better.
 - Any approvable color
- Wreathes
 - If your hair is shoulder length or longer
 - Should be made of dried or preserved flowers and foliage. Silk flowers rarely look appropriate.
 - Should be in approvable colors

Extras

- Sleeves
 - May match or contrast with bodice
 - Should be fairly narrow
 - May pin or tie to bodice
- Partlets
 - White linen or cotton or dark wool
 - Linen partlets may pin or tie over the bodice or tie on under it, worn with a low-necked smock
 - Dark wool partlets should pin over the bodice, worn with a high-necked smock
- Aprons
 - May be white or colored
 - Blue, green, and dust or tan aprons were very common
 - May be pinned on or sewn to a waist tape and tied on.
 - Should be fairly narrow, about 20-30 inches wide
- Shawls and wraps
 - Woven or knitted
 - If knitted, not lace
 - May just be a large piece of fabric folded

Men

The Basics

At a minimum you should wear:

- **A shirt**
- **Shoes and socks**
- **Pants**
- **A jerkin OR**
- **A doublet**
- **A hat**

Underwear

- Shirt
 - Should have long sleeves

- Should have a high neck
- May have either a band collar or a falling collar
- Any approvable solid color
- Socks
 - Should cover any part of your leg not covered by pants
 - Any approvable color
 - No stripes!
- Shoes
 - Leather
 - Clogs, low or calf length boots, closed-toe Birkenstock type
 - Fringe is not appropriate
 - Hiking boots and shoes with similar sole are not appropriate

Outer Clothing

- Pants
 - May wear one of three styles:
 - Trunkhose (pumpkin pants)--very full, come to mid to lower thigh, with a cansion to the knee
 - Venetians--full leg tapering or gathered at the knee, come to just below the knee
 - Full length--full leg, should be tucked into a boot or cross-gartered at the ankle
 - Any approvable color
 - Vertical stripes may be approvable. Talk to your guild leadership and the costume mistress
 - May have in-seam pockets as long as they are not visible
 - **A note for men playing Irish Characters:** If you are playing an Irishman, we ask that in addition to your leine and ionar (the short jacket), you wear trews. These are the fitted breeches worn by some Irish in the late 16th Century. A pattern is available from Reconstructing History. Please see the resources section of the Costume Guidelines for the website.
- Jerkin
 - Sleeveless, unfitted vest
 - Long enough to belt at the waist
 - Any approvable color
 - May have a stand up collar or no collar
 - High neck or V neck
 - May have pockets as long as they are not visible
- Doublet
 - More fitted or tailored than a jerkin
 - Waist length
 - May have tabs or short skirting at waist and should
 - Should have a stand up collar
 - May have sleeves

Headwear

- Head linens
 - Biggins, kerchief
 - Should be worn with a straw or fabric hat or cap
- Hats
 - Straw: low crown and fairly broad brim; natural colored straw

- Wool felt: blocked or just a blank; any approvable color
- Flat cap: any approvable color, preferable single color
- Muffin caps: approvable, but not really a period correct hat-especially for men. Please consider other alternatives. Any approvable color

Extras

- Sleeves
 - May match or contrast with doublet
 - Should be fairly narrow
 - Should tie onto doublet or be set in
- Aprons
 - Leather, linen or wool may be appropriate to your character
 - e.g. smiths, farriers, tinkers, bakers, woodworkers

Yeoman and Citizen or "Middle" Class

What we call the "middle class" were commoners who were highly trained in skilled crafts, merchants, and yeoman farmers-those who owned their own land and brought in a certain level of income. They made up the governing bodies of villages and were some of the first folks to be "upwardly mobile."

Notes for all middle class characters

Depending on the status of your character, your clothes should fall somewhere on the spectrum of resembling working class clothes, but better made out of better fabrics to resembling court costume, but out of less fine fabrics and with less ornamentation. Please consult your guild leadership and the costume mistress for issues specific to your character.

Fabrics

- More finely woven linen, wool, cotton, silk noil, linen/rayon blends
- Flannel, tweedy, plain, and twill weaves are all appropriate for outer clothing
- Jacquard or tapestry type fabric with simple geometric patterns may be appropriate. Please consult your guild leadership and the costume mistress.

Colors

- Earth tones
- Colors may be more intense than those worn by working classes. Unless you are playing a character who is straddling working and middle class, your clothes should not look faded. Medium to medium-dark shades are appropriate. Very dark brown, sometimes called "poor black" may be appropriate. Please consult your guild leadership and the costume mistress.
- Blues
 - Gray or green undertones
 - Navy
 - Cornflower
 - Colonial
- Reds
 - Brick
 - Brown or orange undertones
 - Berry
 - Burgundy
 - Rose
- Greens
 - Olive
 - Forest
 - Apple
 - Sage
 - Gray or blue undertones
- Oranges
 - Red or brown undertones
 - Pumpkin
 - Rust
- Yellows
 - Brown undertones

- Butter
- Mustard
- Gold
- Browns
 - Dark chocolate
 - Tan
 - Tawny
 - Gray, green, or red undertones

Trim

- Can be more extravagant depending on your character
- Try to avoid grosgrain ribbon. It looks very plastic-y and the colors are hard to get right. If you want a premade band of contrasting color, purchased bias tape works better if you are careful about the color.
- Embroidered or jacquard ribbon may be appropriate. Stay away from metallics, celtic designs (unless you are playing Irish)
- Layered trims can look quite attractive and are an easy way to add richness without using inappropriate materials
- Monochromatic embroidery, especially on shirt and shift collars and cuffs, looks very nice. May be done by machine, but check with your guild leadership and the costume mistress.
- Satin ribbon is inappropriate
- Lace is inappropriate

Condition of Clothes

- Should be clean and neat looking
- Should fit well
- Should not be faded or in poor repair

Accessories

- Ruffs
 - Plain white linen
 - Ruffle should be no more than 2" wide
 - If you are a woman, wear your ruff with a high necked smock
 - Small amounts of blackwork along the edge of the ruffle are appropriate for more upper middle class characters
 - Ruffs should be made according to the instructions in the Resource section or purchased from one of the vendors listed in the Resource section
- Belts
 - Leather
 - Buckles should be silver or brass toned and a little dull if possible
- Pouches
 - Leather or fabric
 - Any approvable color
- Gloves
 - Upper middle class characters
 - Leather or fabric (lightweight wool or silk noil works best)
 - May have a small gauntlet cuff or may end at the wrist
 - May be carried tucked under belt

- Blades
 - Short eating knives only
 - Stiletos, bodice daggers, long knives, swords, etc. are inappropriate
- Mugs or cups
 - Wood or pottery
 - Simple pewter for upper middling types
- Jewelry
 - Should be very simple
 - Simple, silver or antique brass toned metal
 - One ring on each hand
 - Simple, cabochon style, semi-precious stones may be appropriate. Consult your guild leadership and the costume mistress.
 - Buttons should be wood, bone, fabric or thread-wrapped. Upper middle class character may have simple silver or antique brass buttons

Women

The Basics

At a minimum you should wear:

- **A smock or chemise**
- **Shoes and socks**
- **A corset or stiffened bodice or a kirtle with a stiffened bodice**
- **An underskirt or petticoat**
- **An overskirt (split or round) and matching bodice OR**
- **A kirtle (skirt and bodice attached at the waist)**
- **A hat**

Underclothes

- Smock or chemise
 - Like working class smock but:
 - Finer fabric
 - May have some monochromatic embroidery, especially on the collar and cuffs: extant examples of embroidery colors include dark blue, dark green, brownish-rose, dark brown, black, white (least common)
 - May have a small (up to 1") gathered or pleated ruffle at the collar and cuffs
 - White or off-white is preferable, but not required
- Socks
 - See working class section
- Shoes
 - Leather
 - Low boots or mary jane type slippers
 - Closed-toe Birkenstock type
 - Clogs
- Corset
 - Should create the smooth, cone-shaped silhouette of the late 16th Century, not Victorian hourglass or wasp-waist

- Should support and slightly flatten the bust, but should not hurt
- May have tabs to spread over hips
- No curved princess seams
- The higher in station your character is, the more stiffly your corset should be boned.
- If you do not wear a corset, your bodice or kirtle should be stiffened appropriately.
- Bloomers
 - See working class section

Outer Clothing

- Underskirt or petticoat
 - Just above ankle length
 - May be corded at the hem for support
 - Any approvable color, but shades of red were very common. Wills indicated that almost every woman who had the means owned at least one red petticoat.
 - May be drawstring, elastic waist, or waistband. Waistband is recommended
 - NOTE: Upper middling women may wear a narrow, cone-shaped hoopskirt or farthingale, if approved by your guild leadership.
 - If you are wearing a farthingale, you may wear a contrasting forepart to show under a split overskirt. Please consult your guild leadership and the costume mistress
- Overskirt
 - May be split in front to show the petticoat or round
 - Should be slightly longer than petticoat or underskirt
 - Should match bodice
- Bodice
 - If low square neckline, should be cut higher than corset
 - For middle to upper middle class, should lace up the sides, side-back, or back, or may close with hooks and eyes in the front
 - May have shoulder and waist tabs or skirts
 - Doublet style is also acceptable, should have a high neck and standing collar
 - Should match overskirt
 - Doublet style bodices may be worn over contrasting kirtles
 - If not worn with a corset, should be stiffened appropriately
- Kirtle
 - Skirt and bodice should match
 - Skirt may be split or round
 - If the bodice of your kirtle laces up the front, the skirt should be round, not split

Headwear

- Head linens
 - Should be white or slightly off-white
 - Caul: small circle of fabric gathered into a band that fits around the back of the head
 - Coif: shaped cap with curved front and a slight bag in the back to fit around hair
 - May be embroidered with an appropriate pattern in monochromatic thread
 - Snoods and hairnets may be worn if approvable color
 - Should be worn under a hat or bonnet
- For lower middling characters:
 - Straw hat: see working class section
 - Flat cap: see working class section

- Wool felt: see working class section
- For upper middling characters:
 - Wool felt: should be blocked into a mid-to tall crown and a fairly narrow brim
 - Tall hat: mid to tall crown with straight or tapered sides, fairly narrow brim. Best covered in lightweight wool or silk noil
 - Bonnet: narrow brim with stiffened circle of fabric cartridge pleated to it. Best in lightweight wool, cotton twill, or silk noil.

Extras

- Sleeves
 - Long sleeves may be open or closed
 - May tie on to bodice or doublet or may be set in
 - If set in, may be elbow length and puffed, or long
 - If set in, should match bodice or doublet
 - If tied on, may match bodice or may match underskirt or forepart
- Partlets
 - A white linen or cotton partlet may be worn under the bodice or doublet with a low necked smock
 - More conservative or old fashioned characters may wear a dark wool partlet over the bodice with a high necked smock
- Overgowns
 - May be loose or fitted
 - A fitted gown is essentially a doublet bodice with a relatively narrow gored split skirt attached at the waist.
 - Fitted gowns should have set in sleeves and the bodice may close up the front with hooks and eyes
 - Loose gowns may close up the front with buttons
 - Either style may close up the front with single loop bows
- Jackets and waistcoats
 - May be worn over a petticoat or kirtle
 - May high or low necked
 - Any approvable solid color
 - Should have long set-in sleeves
- Aprons
 - Should be white for dressier aprons or may colored (blue, green, tan, etc.) for work aprons
 - See working class section for apron description
- Shawls and wraps
 - Woven or knitted
 - If knitted, not lace

Men

The Basics

At a minimum you should wear:

- **A shirt**
- **Shoes and socks**
- **Pants**

- **A jerkin OR**
- **A doublet**
- **A hat**

Underwear

- **Shirt**
 - Should have long sleeves
 - Should have a high neck
 - May have either a band collar or a falling collar
 - White or off-white
- **Socks**
 - Should cover any part of your leg not covered by pants
 - Any approvable color
 - No stripes!
- **Shoes**
 - Leather
 - Clogs, low or calf length boots, closed-toe Birkenstock type
 - Fringe is not appropriate
 - Hiking boots and shoes with similar sole are not appropriate

Outer Clothing

- **Pants**
 - May wear one of two styles:
 - Trunkhose (pumpkin pants)--very full, come to mid to lower thigh, with a cation to the knee
 - Venetians--full leg tapering or gathered at the knee, come to just below the knee
 - Should come to natural waist (at or above navel)
 - Any approvable color
 - May be paned
 - Vertical stripes may be approvable. Talk to your guild leadership and the costume mistress
 - May have in-seam pockets as long as they are not visible
- **Doublet**
 - Should be well tailored
 - Waist length
 - May have tabs or short skirting at waist
 - Should have a stand up collar
 - Any approvable color
 - Should match or coordinate with pants

Headwear

- **For lower middling characters**
 - Straw hat: see working class section
 - Flat cap: see working class section
 - Wool felt: see working class section
- **For middle to upper middle class characters**
 - Wool felt: blocked to middle to tall crown, fairly narrow brim
 - Tall hat: mid to tall crown with straight or tapered sides, fairly narrow brim. Best covered in lightweight wool or silk noil

- Bonnet: narrow brim with stiffened circle of fabric cartridge pleated to it. Best in lightweight wool, cotton twill, or silk noil.

Extras

- Sleeves
 - May be open or closed
 - May tie to doublet or be set-in
- Jerkin
 - Sleeveless
 - For upper middle class characters, may be worn open over sleeved doublet or layered under an open doublet
- Overgown or schaub
 - Upper middle class characters
 - Worn open over doublet
 - Check with your guild leadership and the costume mistress

Resources

Pattern Companies

- Margo Anderson
 - www.margospatterns.com
- Reconstructing History
 - www.reconstructinghistory.com
- Alter Years
 - www.alteryears.com
- The Tudor Tailor
 - www.tudortailor.com

Pattern and Construction Books

- *Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women C1560-1620*
 - Janet Arnold
- *Patterns of Fashion 4: The Cut and Construction of Linen Shirts, Smocks, Neckwear, Headwear and Accessories for Men and Women 1540-1660*
 - Janet Arnold
- *The Tudor Tailor: Reconstructing 16th Century Dress*
 - Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies

Pattern, Research, and Construction Websites

- www.renaissancetailor.com
- www.extremecostumes.com
- www.elizabethancostume.net

Fabric

- Wool
 - www.bblackandsons.com
 - www.fabricmartfabrics.com
 - www.renaissancefabrics.com
 - Stone Mountain and Daughter Fine Fabrics
2518 Shattuck Ave
Berkeley, CA 94704
www.stonemountainfabric.com
- Linen
 - www.fabric-store.com
 - www.fabric.com
 - Stone Mountain and Daughter

Ruff Vendors and Construction

- http://www.stgeorgenorth.org/much_ado_about_sebastopol
 - Click on How to Construct an Elizabethan Ruff by Noel Gielegem
- Renaissance Tailor
 - http://www.renaissancetailor.com/store/products_plainlinenruffs.php
- Very Merry Seamstress
 - <http://www.verymerryseamstress.com/ruff.htm>