



The Company of Saynte George

Clothing Guide - Women
version 1.3 - May 2020





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| | |
|---|-----------|
| Foreword..... | 4 |
| Introduction..... | 5 |
| The minimum of a lady's wardrobe ... | 6 |
| Materials..... | 7 |
| General considerations..... | 8 |
| Shift /shirt..... | 9 |
| First layer of dress..... | 10 |
| Basic Kirtle..... | 10 |
| Longsleeved kirtle..... | 12 |
| The kirtle without waist-seam..... | 13 |
| Pattern kirtle with waist-seam..... | 14 |
| Bodice..... | 14 |
| Pattern kirtle without waist-seam..... | 16 |
| Gowns and overdresses..... | 17 |
| Overdress..... | 17 |
| Gowns..... | 17 |
| Pattern overdress..... | 19 |
| Pattern houppelande..... | 19 |
| Pattern pleated gown..... | 22 |
| Colours..... | 22 |
| Dress Accessoires..... | 22 |
| Headwear..... | 22 |
| Basic belt..... | 22 |
| Belts for gowns and houppelandes..... | 23 |
| Hoods..... | 24 |
| Stockings..... | 24 |
| Turnnshoes and Pattens..... | 24 |
| Drawstring pouches or satchels..... | 25 |
| Buttons..... | 25 |
| Laces..... | 25 |
| Neck scarves..... | 26 |
| Bibliography & Suppliers..... | 27 |

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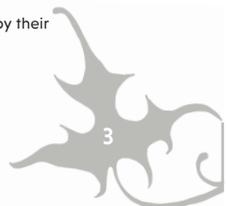
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Foreword

In 1991 I had the pleasure of meeting several members of the Company of Saynt George, and during the following years have enjoyed seeing the Company grow and develop into the foremost medieval re-enactment company in Europe. Among the many friendships with Company members that have developed through the years, I am privileged to include Alessandra Reeves-Gehrig and Manon Dieters.

While I am mostly knowledgeable about costume from the ankles down, they have provided a valuable source of important information and inspiration for women's medieval costume from head to toe. This guide for women's costume is the fruition of many years work, and reworking, and reworking again. In this slim volume they have addressed every detail of women's costume and have included many patterns and useful information for choice of cloth and construction details. Drawing from every possible type of research material, from iconography to archaeology as well as their own personal experiences, the result is a precise description of the entire wardrobe necessary for women of various occupations and social status. In addition to a complete reference section, all of the necessary suppliers for materials have been included. This volume is an important and long needed source for the Company of Saynt George, showing again why this company merits its outstanding reputation.

Marquita Volken PhD
Musée de la Chaussure, Shoe Museum, Schuhe Museum
Lausanne

February 2020





Introduction

This guide presents the basic outlines for women's dress in the Company of Saynt George. It could be used by new comers to re-enactment as well as people who are familiar with the ways of the Company. This guide should be a helpful instrument when making a new outfit or starting out as a re-enactor.

Writing about women's clothing in a military troop, as the Company, is a rather complicated matter. Depending on the kind of woman you want to represent, there are various options. Do you want to represent an artisan, such as a local in the area where the Company currently has put up their tents? Are you married to a soldier or an officer? As an Artisan you should master a certain craft. It requires research, talent and dedication. On top of this you have to determine the clothing suitable to your status. You have to decide whether to choose for our native region or the areas we passed through.

It seems simple but there are many options to choose from. And of course, there are personal preferences.

Regional styles will not be discussed; there are too many. This guide will present the general picture of the Burgundian dress, as worn in the years from 1450 up to 1470. This period is unambiguous in style and fashion and therefore we use this timeframe as our main focus.

Background to the guide

The Company is a military group and its major purpose is to portray the late 15th century as accurately as possible. For clothing in general, this means the regular daily dress, not some fancy, fantasy costume. It also means that we do not follow other re-enactors blindly. Instead we follow our own rules, based on original sources.

Generally, the Company, settled in the Alsace in the middle of the Burgundian region, adopts the Burgundian style. This style was consistent for the whole area from Flanders to Dijon. As artwork travelled from one part of the Burgundian duchy to another, fashion was likewise influenced and widespread.

Unlike the soldiers of the Company, women do not have a uniform. Though we aim for more uniformity in Burgundian style. As an exception, a few ladies dressed in a more regional style could be visible in the company, after all, it is an international group and it is obvious that every fashion has its own particular appearance. If you decide to use a regional style follow the sources consistently and do not mix styles, but, do not make the common rare, and the rare common.

In general, we have three categories of women in the Company:

1. Camp followers or lower-class working women,
2. Middle class artisans or servants,
3. Higher class artisans, officers' wives or bourgeois townswomen.

The roles we represent very often depend on the theme or location of the event. There are many options to put together your wardrobe.

Some basic issues are rather common. First, your outfit should be clean and neat at all times. In the 15th century people took care of their clothes because they were highly valued in many ways. If your headscarf is dirty, change it, or add an extra layer to it, to hide the dirt. Clean it as soon as possible.

For dirty work wear an apron, remove your sleeves (remember putting them on again after the work is done). In case of wet and muddy weather: use your belt to hook up your dresses. If any part of your dress is falling apart or torn: mend it, even during an event.





The minimum of a lady's wardrobe

In order to help you to put together your wardrobe we present a few suggestions. Starting with the basics, followed by optional additions.

Basic dress:

- Woolen kirtle with short- or long sleeves and a tight-fitting bodice. The skirt should be wide, minimum 4 metres seam width. The colour depends on your status.
- 2-3 linen shirts, mid-calf length
- One pair of stockings/ hosen made from wool, with garters, (Two pairs of stockings would be even better.)
- 2-3 white linen headscarves.
- Two pairs of additional woolen sleeves (for decency on short sleeved kirtles and for warmth with a long-sleeved kirtle) 1 pair for work, 1 pair for church and dressing up.
- Leather belt with an appropriate medieval buckle and metal belt ending. The width of the belt should not be more than 1,5 cm.
- Simple purse made from leather or woolen cloth- worn with the belt.
- Two linen aprons or one apron and a linen towel to be tucked into your belt.
- One long sleeved dress for warmth, used as second layer and cut a bit looser than your basic kirtle.
- One pair of low cut turnshoes with straps or ankle height boots. The choice depends on your status.
- One pair of wooden pattens
- Woolen cloak calf-length and three quarters of a circle wide.

Camp followers and lower-class working women

A hard-working woman should be able to stand her ground. Her clothing reflects this; it is practical, not fancy. The basic dress is all she needs but it is frequently darned and patched.

Middle- and lower-class artisans or servants

As a common rule, a lower-class artisan gets dirty hands (there are exceptions. Linen weavers are not wealthy either). She must be able to work in her craft and therefore she needs freedom of movement in her clothing. If she is a travelling artisan, her clothing would be closer to the camp-follower, just not as worn down, as she is more independent as an artisan. As a townswoman it depends on her type of craft and on her status in her guild.

She could have the following additions to the basic dress: A Burgundian woolen overgown, floor length or slightly dragging for Sunday.

- A belt with a nice buckle
- A purse with silk laces.

Higher class artisan, officer's wives or bourgeois townswomen.

These crafts were usually found in cities and were considered more or less clean jobs, but, again, it depended on the craft. The clothing reflects her status as well as the status of her family. It is well cut, the material as good as allowed, sometimes a little fancy.

She could have the following additions to the basic dress:

- A Burgundian woolen overgown, floor length or slightly dragging, possible lined with fur for Sunday. A belt with a nice buckle
- Darker and more intense colours for the dresses.
- A purse with silk laces and tassels
- Low cut turnshoes





Wool

As we know the production and trade in woolen cloth was the most important source for economy in the High middle ages. Especially in the Burgundian area. Many different qualities of wool were produced and imported, the colour and the origin often were causing the material to be classified as "luxury cloth". By the end of the 15th century we see a trend of tabby weave replacing the more time-consuming twill: many if not most fabrics were fulled, teaseled and shorn. That process rendered every fabric softer, thicker and warmer. The production of twill would be too time consuming for a fulled fabric, although there are beautiful worsted twills (2-2 twills up to 4-shed-twill), made from a slightly denser weave, but made of yarn that is much more twisted, and therefore shinier. The look is remarkably modern, resembling a modern age merino gabardine.

Wool was the material for all types of clothing, womens' dress should be made of wool. In our modern times there is a wide range of possibilities we can use for kirtles.

For example, you can use the thinner variants for your basic dress, but take in to account when making a pattern that the thinner woolens from the 15th century were approximately 90 cm maximum width. In medieval times this type of cloth was called saai or drap. It was much lighter than broadcloth. The surface was mildly felted because of the production and cleaning methods used in the period. For re-enactors this means that you can use woolen cloth with a smooth or a shiny surface. Both are a good choice for dresses.

Wool has outstanding qualities. It offers a good isolation, both for warmth and cold, it doesn't attract moisture, it is fire resistant and has a self-cleaning capacity.

Wool was not cheap. An aune (also aulsnes, ca 70 cm in Flanders and Brabant, but 115 cm in Paris) of good quality cloth would cost 20 sous. That is 10 days wages. If you earned an average income and considering other expenses as food, shoes, rent, taxes etc., you would be able to afford a new dress about once every 4-5 years. Most of the time you might want to alter a hand-me-down.

Linen (Flax)

Linen is made of flax. The very long fibres are easy to spin. The material of choice for underwear, headwear, aprons and lining for bodices is linen. Please do not compromise by using a cotton/linen blend. Although mixed fabrics already existed in 15th century, the evidence for them being used for underwear is not well-supported. Mixing fibres in the 15th century was merely using a linen warp and a cotton weft. This type of cloth is also known as fustian. It is still available today, usually woven as a bespoke order ([link in the sources](#)).

The few left over linen fragments we know of are tabby, or plain woven with often a close warp/weft: between 15/12 to 22/22 threads per centimeter. They are often woven in a rather narrow width (about 60-80 cm) If you have the opportunity, try to get some hand-spun, hand-woven peasant linen (via some re-enactor specialized retailers and flea-markets). For bodices, it is very important to get a firm kind of linen, the best is the old 19th century linen. For veils try to get a softer handwoven linen, it drapes beautifully.

Linen has many useful qualities. It absorbs moisture and is therefore useful for undergarments. It absorbs your sweat and prevents your dress getting smelly. Linen is easy to wash and bleach. Linen is also very strong and is therefore useful for the lining in the close-fitting bodices which are strained a lot. Because of its durability, it can be used for a very long period. In inventories, shirts are usually mentioned as "good" or "bad", this being the conditions these shirts are in.

Dyes do not stay well in linen, which is why we hardly use coloured linen for lining. Headscarves, shifts and aprons are white or off-white as supported by iconography.



Silk

Through the whole medieval period silk is known as a luxury material. Though not uncommon, and already widely imported for 200 years, it was mainly used for fashionable items and luxury linings. In various parts of Europe there were laws concerning the use of silk in clothing and headaddresses. In the Burgundian area there were, as far as we know, no laws against the use of silk. Iconography mainly shows us woolen dresses and silk accessories such as woven (broad) belts.

In comparison with wool, silk was more expensive. Silk taffeta cost 48 sous per aune, and silk velvet started at 72 sous per aune. Silk costs more than twice the price of wool. Silk brocade or silk-velvet brocade as often seen on paintings, cost up to 528 sous per aune, that was 264 days of work.

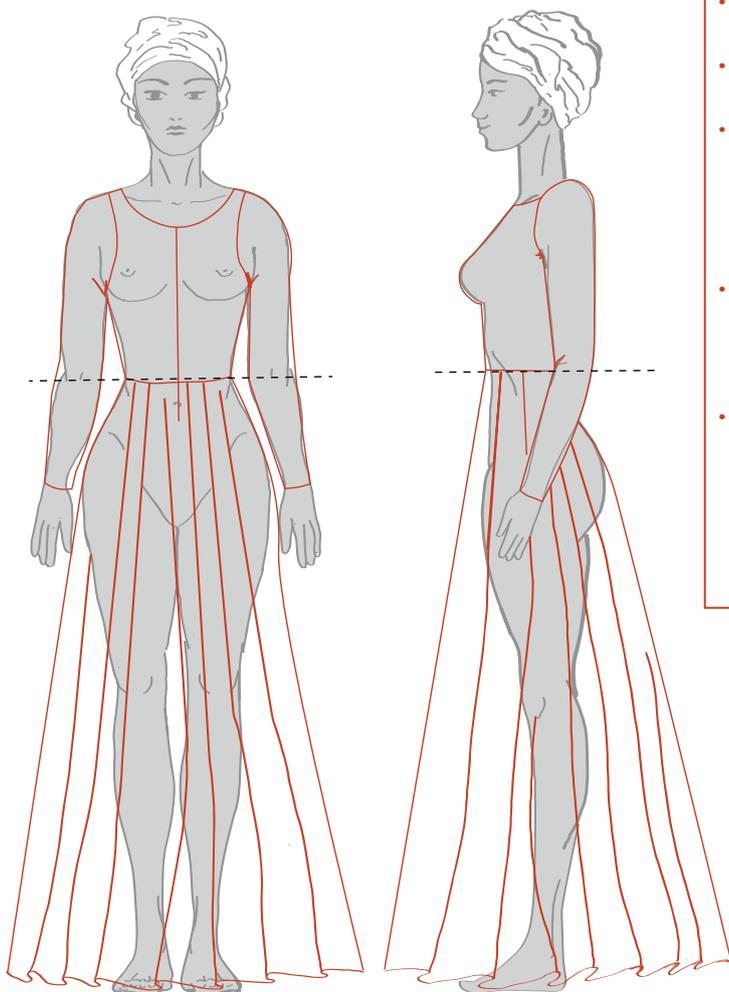




General considerations

The second half of the 15th century (1450-1470) is the last part of what we call the middle-ages. It is the period of the high Gothic. This is visible in every aspect of art, as well as in clothing. Every period in fashion has its own silhouette. For women's dress in the late 15th century Burgundian area, the pear shape is the preferable silhouette. This means that the waistline is higher than nowadays, as a result of this your legs will look longer. The skirts are wide and the belly is very visible in the shape of the dresses. The bust is pushed back a bit and plays no important part in the silhouette. The bodices are very tightly fitted to the body.

The challenge for every costume maker is to get the shape right and to manipulate the pattern towards the ideal silhouette. Above all, make dresses which are efficient for everyday- use. To make a good dress, pattern making is of the highest importance.



The waist is at the level were your body naturally bends

No goes in women's dress:

- Linen dresses; there is no historical evidence for linen kirtles. A genuine 15th century dress is always made of wool. Because of the excellent isolating quality, you are, even on a hot summer day better off in a woolen dress.
- Sleeves with laces and points; Sleeves should be pinned on sleeves. There is no evidence for laced sleeves on kirtles.
- Brocade sleeves: to avoid. To get the right pattern is very tricky. If you can find brocade, it is extremely expensive, and was even more expensive in the period. Better common and correct sleeves than fancy incorrect sleeves.
- High neckline in your undershirt; The neckline of the shirt or underdress should never be lower than the neckline of your basic kirtle.
- Showing your hair: In the Burgundian style there is also no evidence for braids.
- Criss-Cross lacing; Iconography supports spiral lacing with a single lace for dress closing.
- Bi-coloured / Mi-parti dresses; Historically there is no evidence for dresses with gores in different colours. Dresses always should be of one single colour. Mi-parti dresses are an exceptional feature in 14th century noble-folk fashion
- Modern princess seams; We know there were patterns with additional seams to fit the bodice, but they look different from the modern princess seams. Be carefull!
- Shoes with synthetic soles. Turnshoes are made of leather and have no synthetic soles. We recommend the use of pattens to keep your shoes longer in good shape.

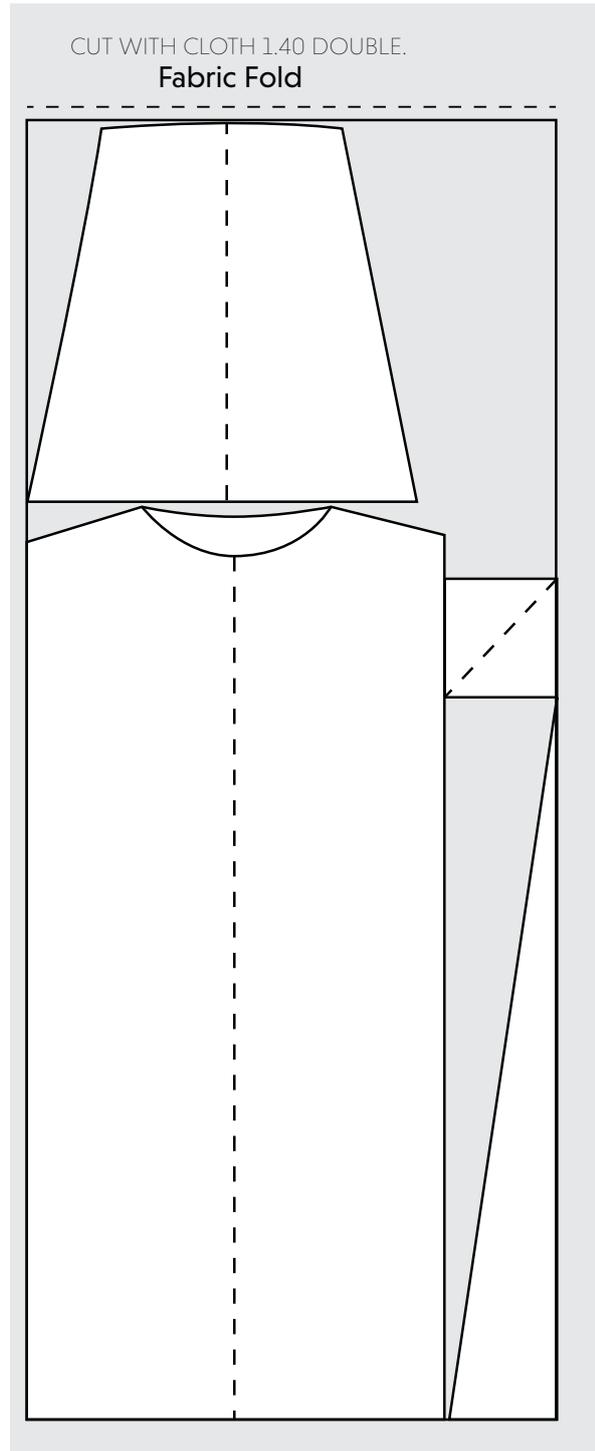
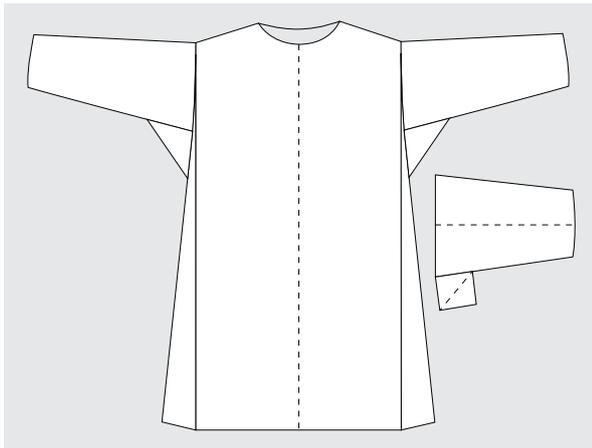


Shift /shirt

Mostly called chemise, shift, smock or shirt. Made of off-white or white linen. Linen naturally tends to get white after a few washes. Beige or natural coloured linen are not advisable for undergarments.

The general shape is simple. No ribbons at the neckline or sleeve or a gathered neckline. Length: About mid-calf is fine, floor length is unpractical. It will get dirty. Sleeves: Can be both narrow or wide. Iconography supports both. For people with visible, man-made skin-discolouring, narrow sleeves might be a help not to roll up sleeves and show a tattoo. Wider sleeves are practical to roll up and do mucky work. The Construction is similar to a man's shirt, but longer. The neckline is wider to fit to your kirtle. There are square gussets in the armpit to increase mobility. In a close fitted dress these gussets are a necessity.

To make the shift you can best use seam and fell seam, or a french seam, this is a classical way to make seams in linen. The seams are supple and sturdy. They even enable you to wear your chemise inside out.



① *De mulieribus claris*

British Library Royal 20 C V,
first quarter of the 15th century

② *Bohort helps Benigne*

BNF Fr. 111, fol. 139, c. 1480





First layer of dress

Basic Kirtle

The most common kirtle for the 15th century has a waist-seam. Dresses with a waist-seam appear from circa 1430 and became after this introduction widespread.

The bodice exists of only four pattern parts. There are no darts to enable the tight-fitting. The skirt consists generally of 12 triangular shaped parts. There are different ways to attach the skirt to the bodice. In the pictures there are attachments with pleats, frowns and smooth visible. Another possibility is to make pleats or frowns only at the centre back of the skirt to get a nice flow at the back of the skirt.



Sleeves

In the Burgundian area, dresses with short sleeves were widespread. All types of sleeves have very round armholes, the upper part of the sleeve should cover your shoulder-bone. The sleeve is placed high under the arms, close to the armpit to enhance mobility.

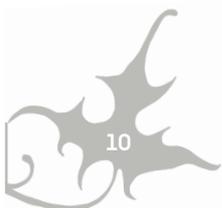


Pinned on sleeves

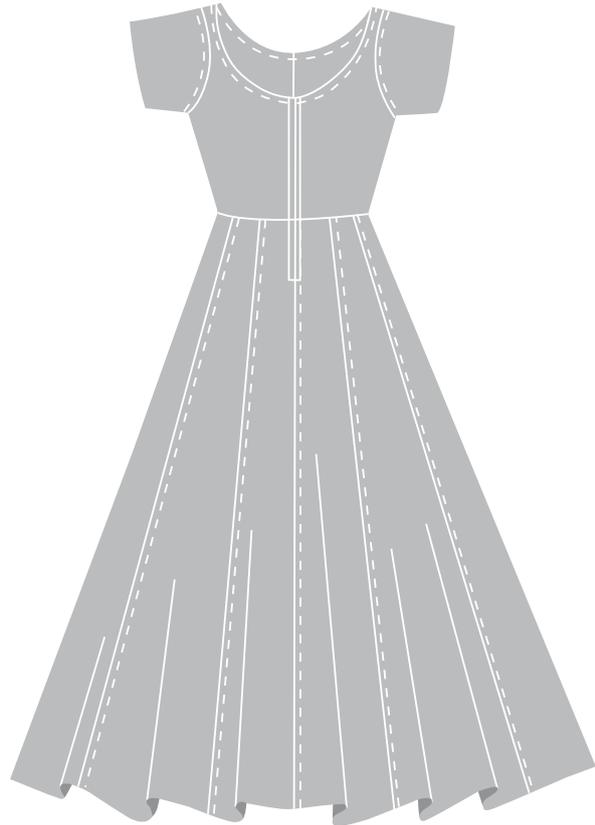
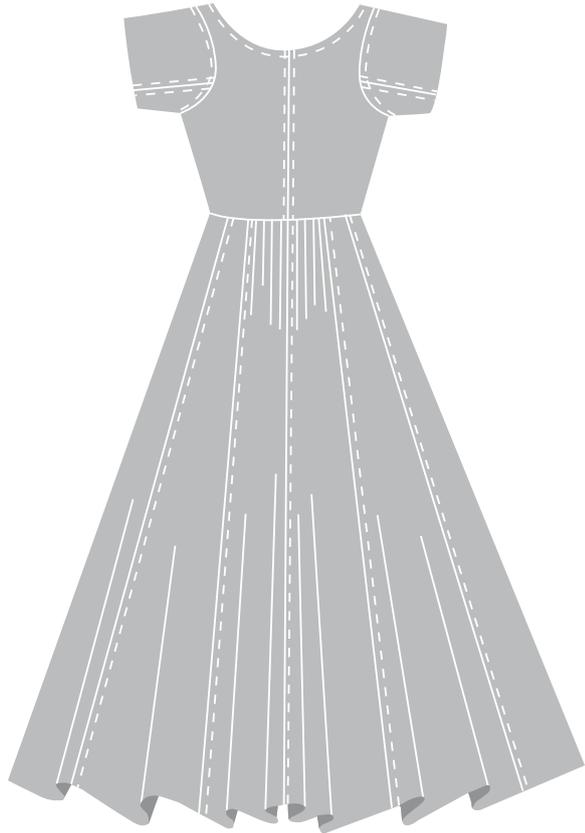
Shirtsleeves are rarely visible in the pictures, therefore pinned on sleeves are obligatory, except during filthy work. The sleeves always have a different colour than the kirtle. You can swap left over cloth with other women. Sleeves are often made from one piece of cloth with a seam at the back of your arm. Sleeves are seen in the pictures with and without cuffs and with or without buttons.

Be careful with silk sleeves. To choose the right weave design is tricky. Good reproductions of patterned silk are extremely expensive and were even more expensive in the period. Better to use plain silk or just a pair of good woolen sleeves instead of going wrong with a modern silk brocade. Wool is the preferable material for sleeves. The colour depends on your activity or role. Sleeveless kirtles with pinned on sleeves at the shoulder are extremely rare, but do exist.

① Rogier van der Weijden, c. 1445-1450, Seven Sacraments Altarpiece (detail), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen



First layer of dress



② **Rogier van der Weijden**, ca. 1434, Deposition
Museo del Prado, Madrid

③ **Dieric Bouts**, c. 1455, Passion Altarpiece (side wing)
Museo de la Capilla Real, Granada

④ **Hans Memling**, c. 1480, Triptiek van Adriaan Reins
Sint-Janshospitaal, Brugge

⑤ **Hans Memling**, c. 1491, Grevarade Tryptich
Sankt Annen museum, Lubeck

⑥ **Franconian Master**, ca. 1500, The erection of the cross
Museum van schone kunsten, Brussel
(foto: Manon Dieters)





First layer of dress

Longsleeved kirtle

Outside the Burgundian area the long-sleeved dress was more common. You will find this kirtle in different regions. The sleeves are tight fitting therefore, a slit along the underarms might be necessary. To close the slit buttons, or metal eyes with lacing can be used.

This type of sleeve has round armholes also, the upper part of the sleeve should cover your shoulder-bone. The sleeve is high under the arms close to the armpit to enhance mobility. Keep in mind, we aim at the Burgundian style without the extremely large armholes which you can observe in German styles.

Fastenings

There are a few options for fastening the dress. The dress opening can be at the front, side or although seldom used, at the back. Iconography supports spiral lacing with a single lace. Either through hand sewn eyelets or with metal eyes. The metal eyes can be sewed inside or at the outside of the dress opening. Hooks and eyes are another good option. Most dresses visible in images from the 15th century, seem to have an invisible fastening.



⑦ **Hans Memling**, c. 1491
Grevarade Tryptich, Sankt Annen museum, Lubeck



⑧ **Dieric Bouts**, c.1455,
Passion Altarpiece,
Museo de la Capilla Real,
Granada



⑨ **Dieric Bouts the Younger**,
c.1470, Pearl of Brabant
Alte Pinakothek, München

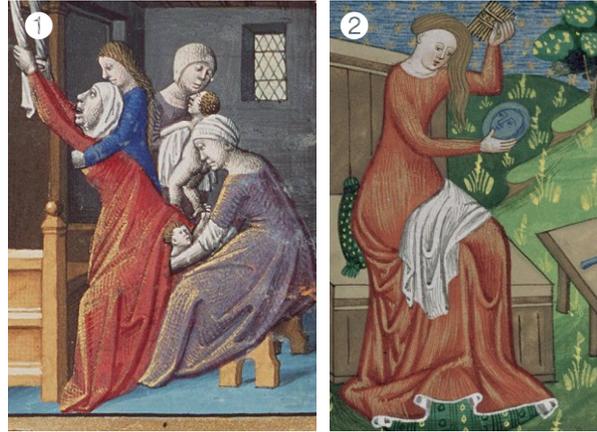




The kirtle without waist-seam

According to sources, this type of kirtle is less common than the kirtle with waistline, mostly seen on pregnant women, as seen in the Visitation painting. This type of dress also has a tight fitted bodice. Shaping this dress will need a variety of long pattern parts. The shape is based on the Greenland findings but adjusted to the 15th century silhouette.

This is no princess line dress! The seams will not follow the line of the bust but are between the bust and the side seam. Therefore, the bust will be flatter.



① **François Maitre**, c. 1475-80, Birth of Esau and Jacob (detail), book I-X (translation from the Latin by Raoul de Presles) (manuscript "Den Haag, MMW, 10 A 11"), Museum Meermanno Westreenianum, The Hague

② **Master of Boethius**, 1st quarter of the 15th century, Des cleres et nobles femmes, "De claris mulieribus" in an anonymous French translation, French, British Library, London

③ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1440-45, Visitation Of Mary, Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig

④ **Master of the Castello della Manta**, 1411-16, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Saluzzo





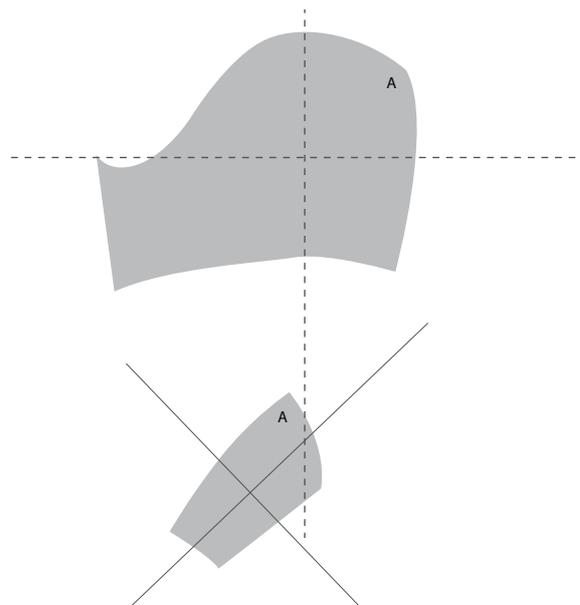
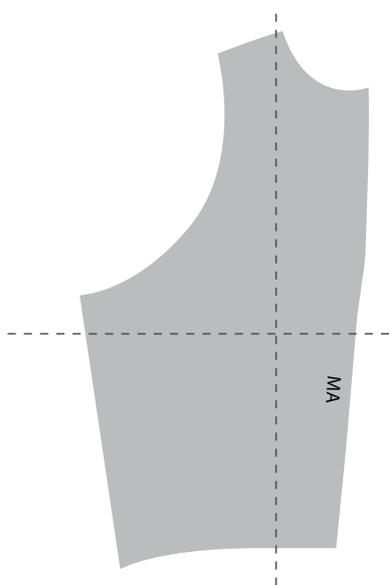
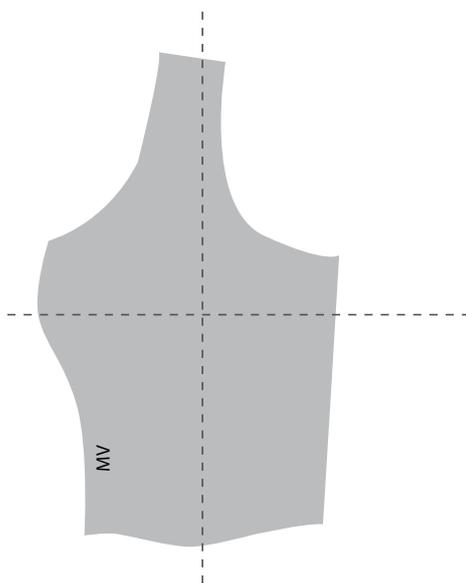
First layer of dress

Pattern kirtle with waist-seam

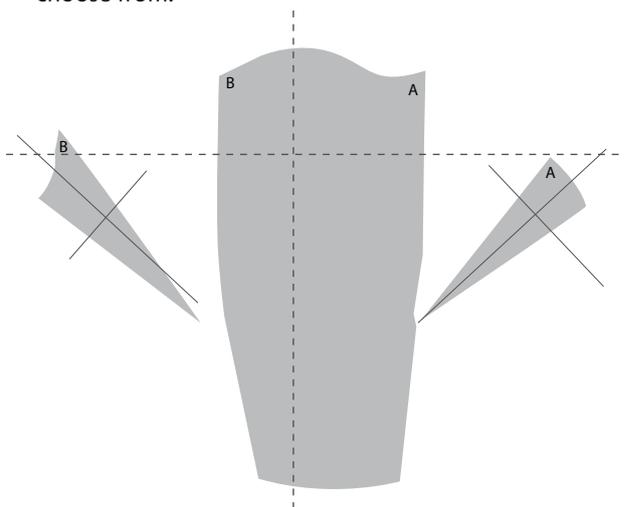
Bodice

The bodice consists of four parts. Making a good fitting pattern is a time-consuming task. Although, making your personal pattern is a good investment. The best way to achieve this is to make a mock-up first (or several). You can use a cheap material like a firm cotton muslin. Leave an additional four centimetres to the waistline to be able to make alterations when necessary.

As visible in the drawing, the waistline in the pattern is curved. This creates, without the use of darts, the space for the bosom. While shaping your bodice you will discover that the curved line will follow your waistline



When the bodice, after a few attempts, fits properly, you add the sleeves. Use the cotton also to make a mock-up sleeve. There are different kinds of sleeves to choose from.



The cotton mock-up can be used afterwards as your personal pattern. Making a second dress will be much easier. When you make a good fitting bodice, this pattern can be used to fit both type of sleeves because the armhole has a universal shape. It is nice to have your own personal pattern with both possibilities. Working with a mock-up makes this possible.

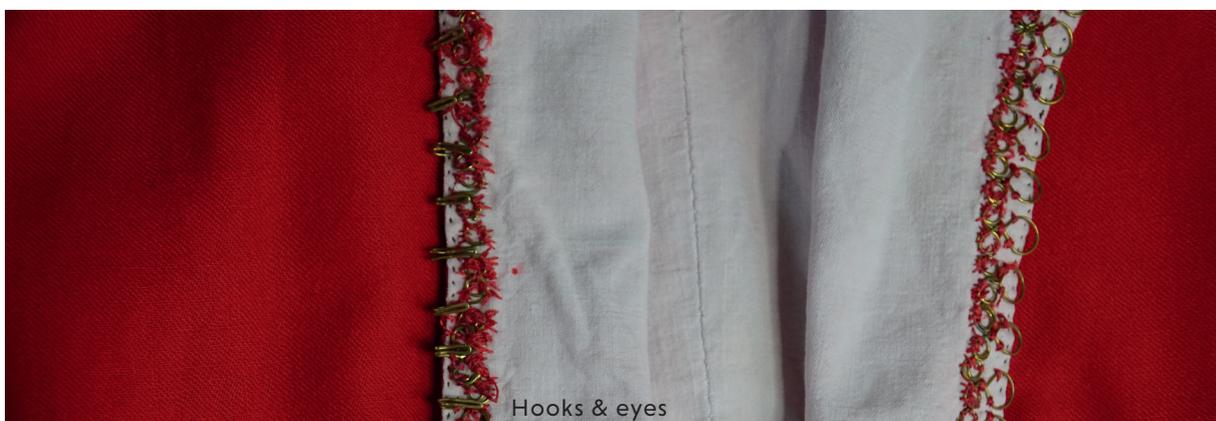
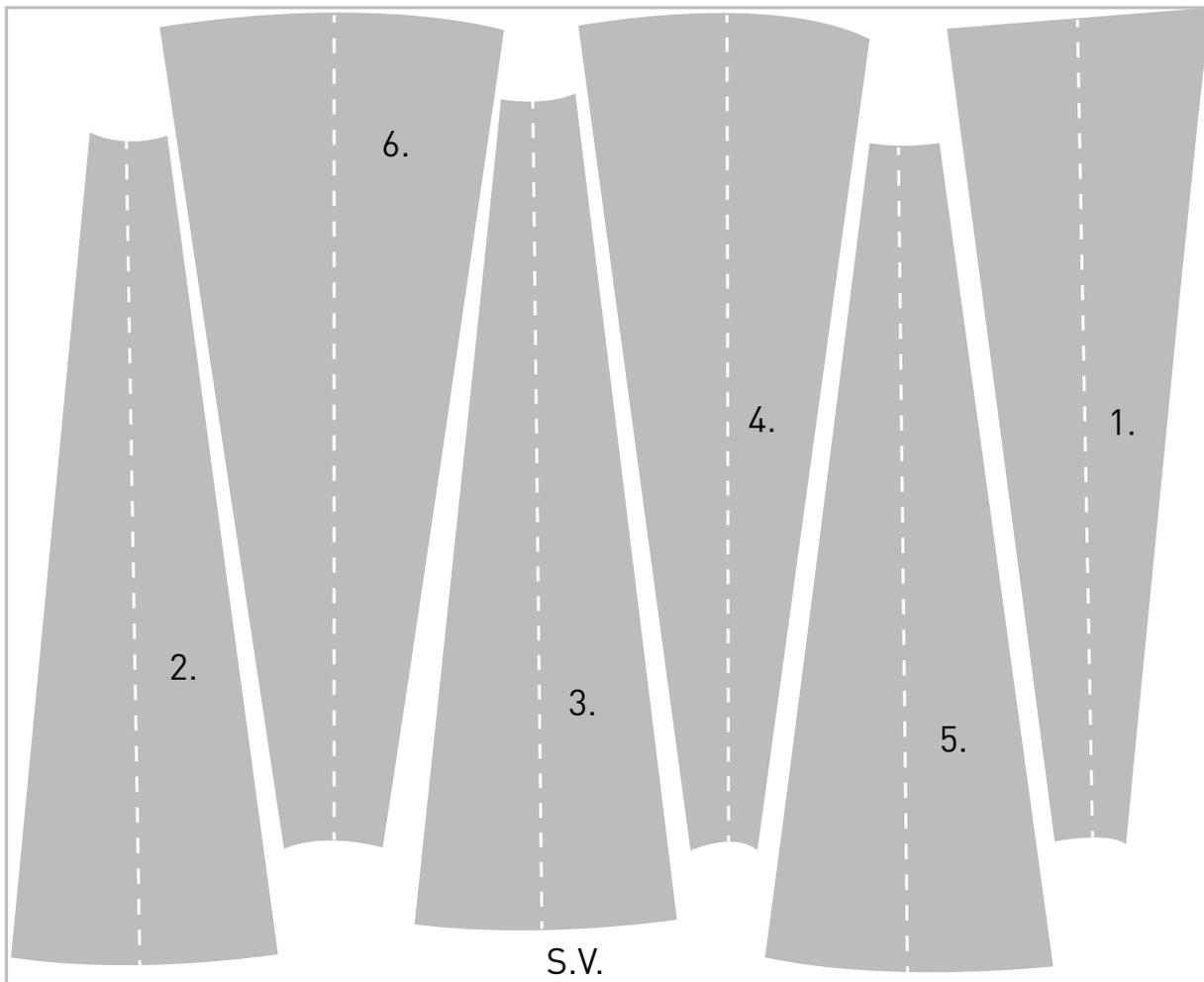
When you have finished the patterns you can cut the skirt and the linen lining for the bodice. Wear the lining a few times directly on your bare skin. Linen will expand under influence of your body heat. After wearing it, you adjust the bodice to the perfect fit. Take the lining apart and use these parts as a pattern to cut the woolen upper layer. Take care to leave the additional four centimetres seam-allowance in the waistline also in the woolen parts!!! You will need these to attach the skirt.



First layer of dress

Linen is much stronger than the average wool. The most sensible method is to attach the skirt directly on the lining. Make sure to stitch the skirt inside out to the bodice. After this, you can stitch the woolen upper layer invisibly to the outside of the dress.

Or treat the lining and upper-fabric as one layer in the bodice, and always sew through both layers at once. The result will be less tidy. It is advisable not to line the skirt part.

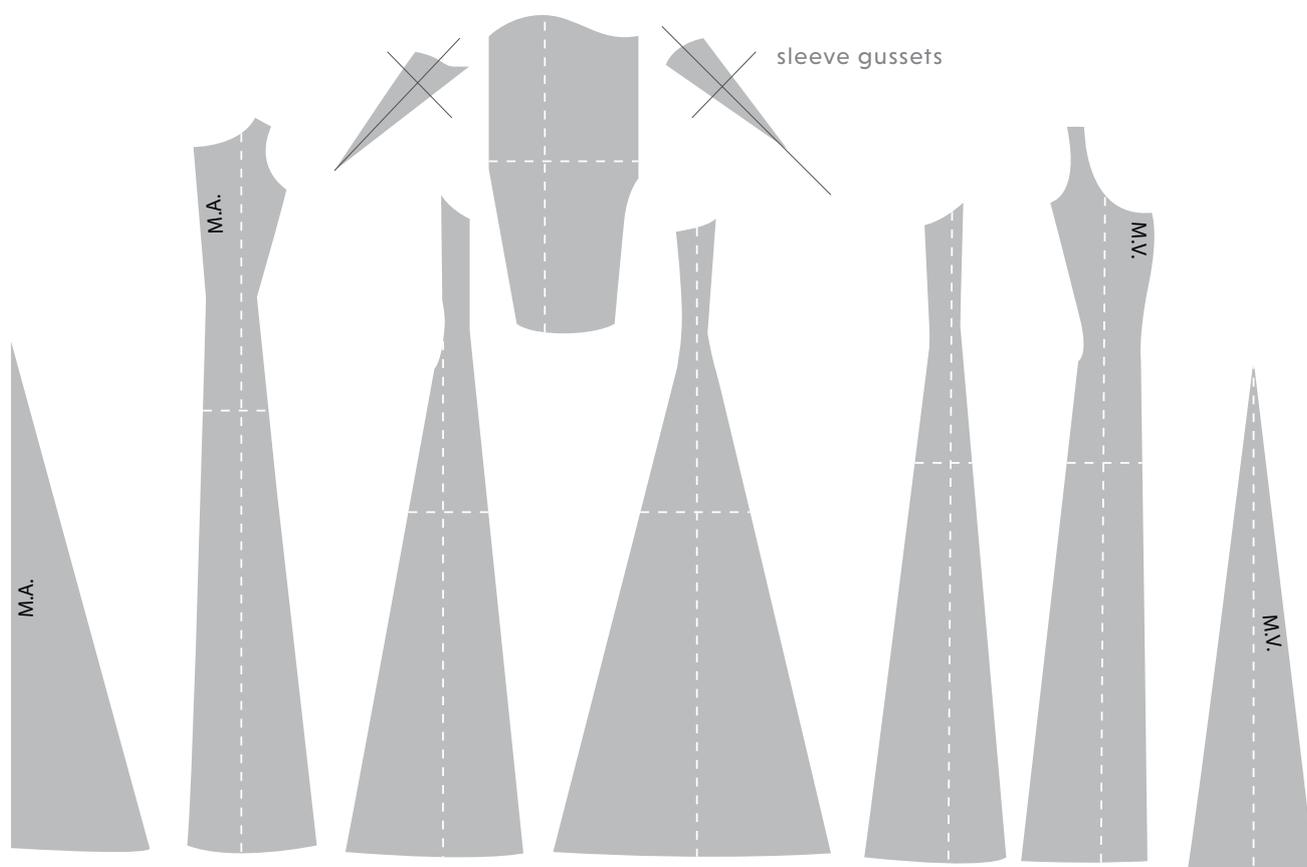




First layer of dress

Pattern kirtle without waistline

For this kirtle it is also advisable to make a mock-up first. Keep in mind to make a wide skirt. This pattern is not easy to make, invest time to do this precisely. As with the other dresses, this dress has a round armhole, the upper part of the sleeve should cover your shoulder-bone and the sleeve fits close to the armpit to improve mobility. This kirtle can be made without lining, partial lining or complete lining. It is also a nice dress to use as a second, warm layer because it fits easily over a basic kirtle. The lack of a waistline makes the dress more flexible.





Gowns and overdresses

Different options

Iconography shows in general women wearing two dresses. In fact, pictures with only a basic dress are rare. Wearing a second dress over the basic kirtle was quite common. Basically, the second layer, gown or overdress, is your outdoor clothing. It is used to keep you warm, but will distinguish your status even more than your basic kirtle.

The second layer of dress can either be a dress, quite similar to your kirtle, slightly larger cut, or an over-gown. The first one is still a fitted dress, the second one has a different silhouette and a different pattern.

Overdress

A just warm overdress is a slightly larger dress worn over the basic kirtle. The material of choice could be a thicker, fulled wool, because the thicker material has a richer and more voluminous appearance, it will give the dress a different look. An overdress may have long or short sleeves. If you use the overdress, for example, over a long-sleeved kirtle, you can use additional sleeves for extra warmth. Iconography often suggests fur linings. Whether you would like to line your dress or gown, is a matter of choice. Even an unlined dress or gown of good quality wool will keep you warm in cold weather.

Iconography sometimes shows us with brocade gowns, but unfortunately, we are neither saints nor nobles. Therefore, we make our dresses of woolen cloth.

Gowns

A gown is a larger and more voluminous dress than the simpler overdress. There are two types of gowns in the 15th century presented in the iconography. Both have an A-line shape. The pleated gown and the simpler houppelande. Pleated gowns are more visible in pictorial evidence. The houppelande, based on the predecessor of the late 14th century, is a simpler type of gown and easier to replicate. Both types have a high waistline, supported by a belt, just below the bust. The skirts are very wide.

Overdress or Gown?

Because of the large amount of cloth used for a gown, this dress is very heavy. It can limit your movements solely by its weight. The (broader) belt sometimes feels like a corset, because it has to be worn tightly. Gowns are in general dresses to demonstrate one's status. Although you can decide, depending on the material and colour, to make a plainer version.



Still, gowns will need a lot of material; the basic outlines of these dresses are similar.

Gowns have also a few advantages. They are really warm and the volume will give you a lot of room for movement. But still, they are for example, not suitable for carrying water for the lads or working in the kitchen.





Second layer of dress



① **Rogier van der Weijden**, 1435, Deposition, Museo del Prado, Madrid

② **Maitre de Saint- Jean-de-Luze**, c.1470, Potrait dit de Jeane de Montagu, Bourgogne, Musee Dijon. (foto Manon Dieters)

③ Miniature from The Decameron by Giovanni Boccaccio, 1432

④ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1445-50, Seven Sacraments Altarpiece (detail), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

⑤ **Hans Pleydenwurff**, c. 1457 - Kalvarienberg, Germanisches National Museum Nuremberg (foto: Manon Dieters)

⑥ **Petrus Christus**, c. 1449, St Eligius in his workshop, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

⑦ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1435-38, The Magdalene Reading, National Gallery, London

Second layer of dress



Pattern overdress

See the basic outlines for kirtles. Enlarge the pattern just enough to make them fit as a second layer of clothing. You can make them shorter or with short sleeves to show your basic kirtle as well.

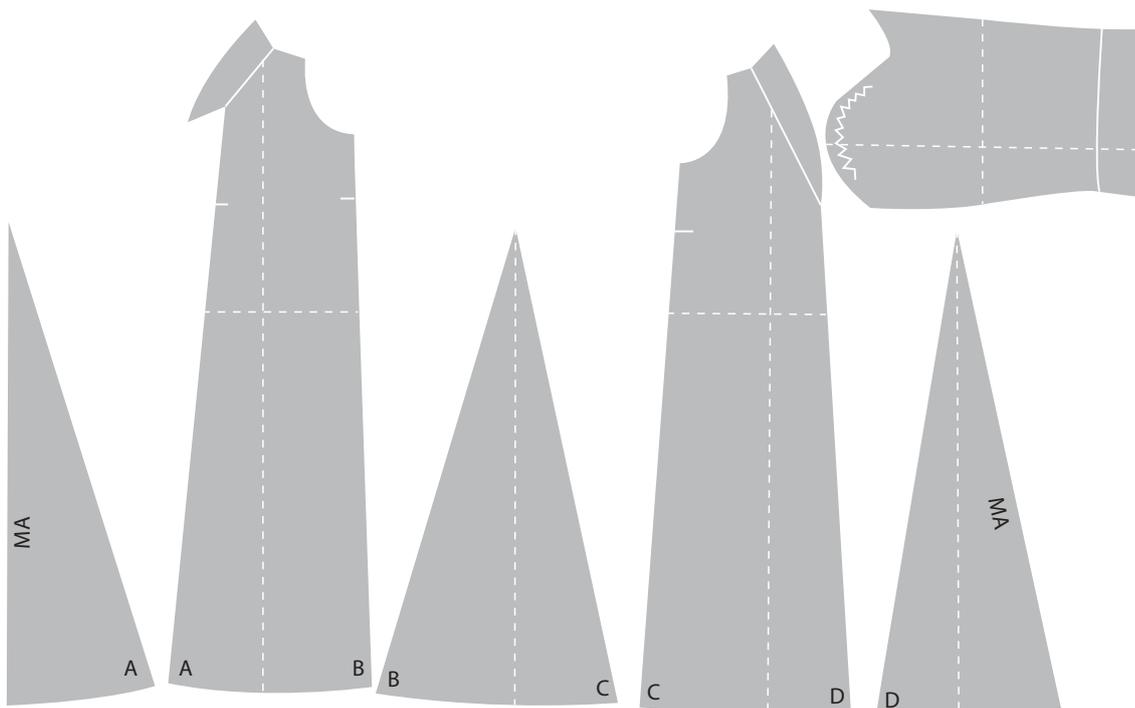
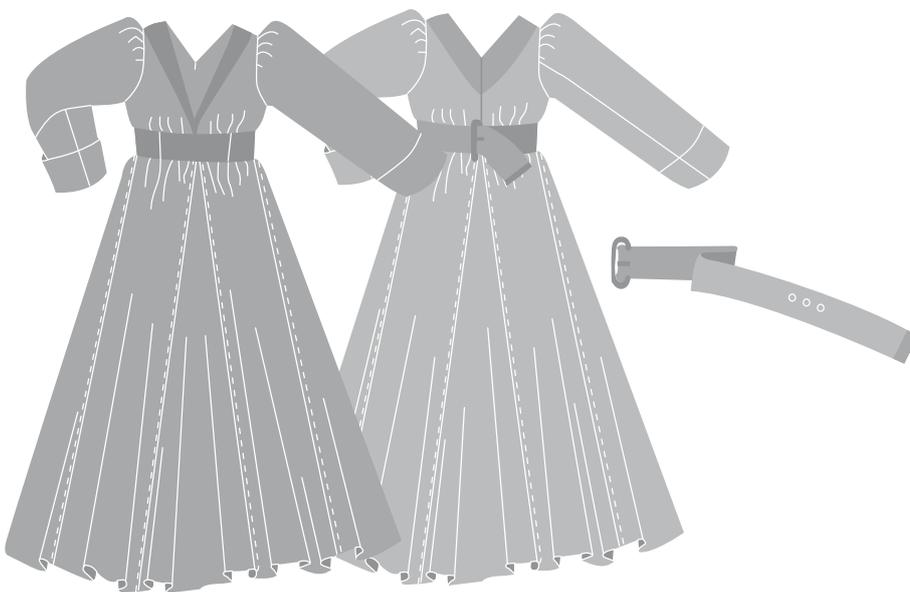
Pattern houppelande

This type is based on a basic pattern from the 13th century: the cotte. Although wider and larger, the basic outline has the same simplicity. The houppelande is in some aspects, but not entirely the fashionable V-neck gown worn by nobility. As full as you can afford, and impractically long would be nice.

Fur trimmed or lined. Actually, even the term houppelande is in 15th century out of fashion, the term we mostly came across was robe. Modern seamstresses have somehow come to use terms as kirtle or houppelande because robe is a ambiguous term.

To make the dress simpler you can use the sleeves from the pleated gown pattern. or you can leave out the collar. It is also possible to make the closing higher and leave out the stomacher.

It is also helpful to make a mock-up from a muslin for the houppelande. It will help you to obtain the right fit, shape and flair.





Second layer of dress

Pattern pleated gown

These gowns are the equivalent of the pleated male jackets. They are very voluminous, even more than the houppelande. There is a lot of iconographical evidence, but it seems to be a typical urban style. You can make this kind of dress in a luxury variant or a plainer version.

The basic pattern is shaped without the gores used in the houppelande, instead extra pattern parts are added to make the skirt wide.

Type A with collar is simpler and less fashionable, possibly even slightly outdated for 15th century. The collar seems a relic from the 14th century, but is similar to some male gowns from the 15th century.

Apart from the collar, the colour and the finishing also determine the level of luxury.



type A



type B



Second layer of dress



Type B is more luxurious and lined (partially with fur). Fur lacing is often seen in pictures. But we assume this is a real "Sunday best" and might not be as visible in daily life as iconography suggests.

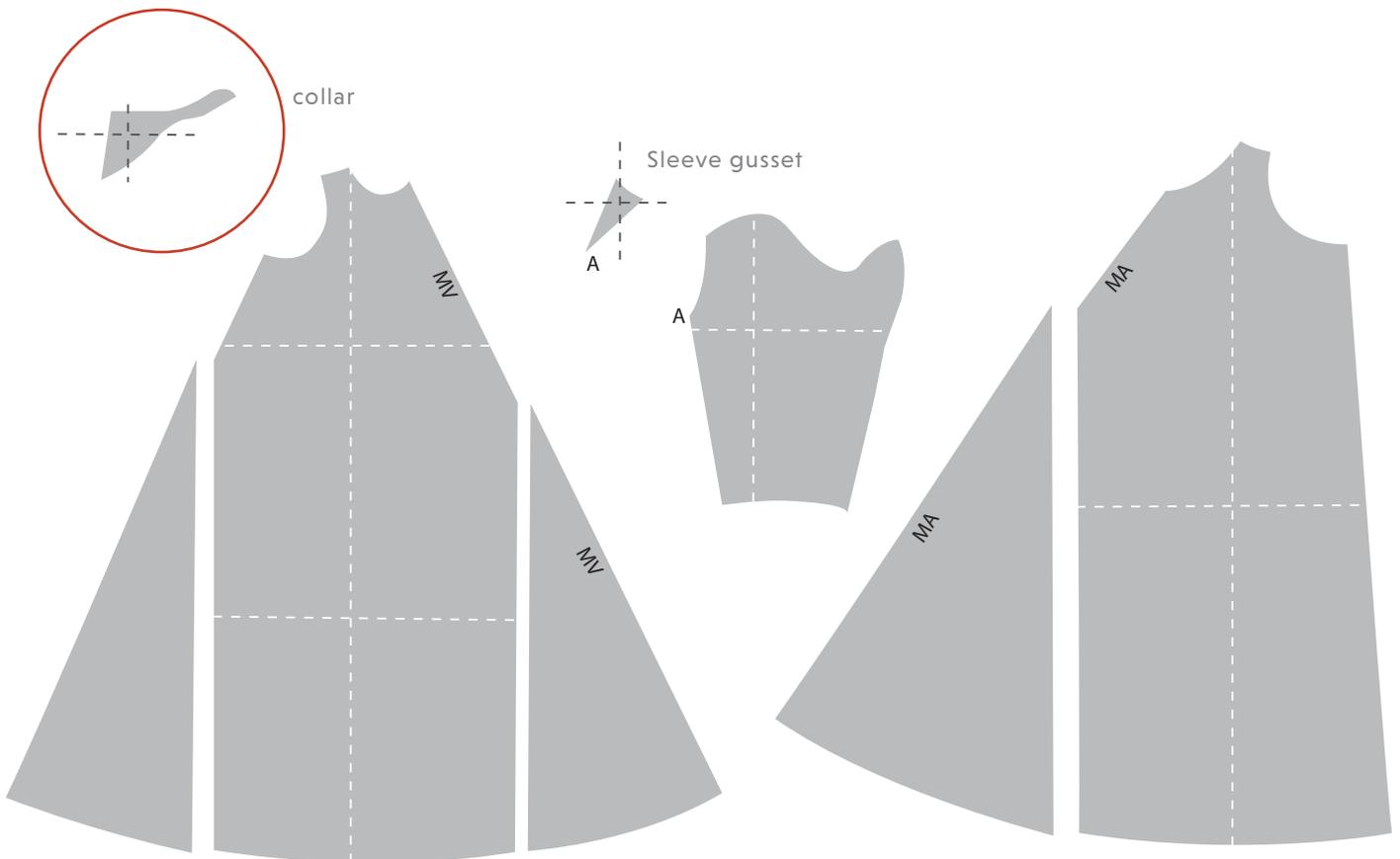
The basic shape is similar to type A, for type B you can use a broader belt with a nicer buckle.

Fixated pleats are typical for these types of gowns. They are fixated at the inside of the gown with the help of sewn (linen) strips. You have to make one at the (high) waistline and another above.

To achieve the correct model, you should sew the dress together and then decide on which height you want to put the waistline. There are no pleats at the left and the right side of the gown. You have to divide the pleats equally, starting at centre-front and centre-back as shown in the picture.



pleated gown inside-out



pattern for type A & B



Colours & Dress Accessoires

Colours

In the 15th century there were many colours available. In general, it is best to avoid the very dark and very intense colours. For cloth these shades, expensive dyes were used: for example, kermes that was imported from the Mediterranean. Dark colours were dyed multiple times. Dark cloth was only used by extremely wealthy people.

For ordinary dress you can use the blue shades of woad or indigo. This colour is similar to all shades of blue jeans.

Red with an orange, tomato or brick shade is also a good choice, because this was dyed with madder, which can be produced in different qualities and is relatively unfussy with mordants. Greens, a mixture of reseda and woad, are very acceptable for dresses in general, but again keep in mind that it is a double-dye. In fact, there are many colours to choose from, and while it is possible to obtain nearly every colour by the use of different mordants and alkaloids, try to avoid the synthetic looking colours like screaming pinks and turquoises. Only because a modern cloth dyer can dye a certain shade, does not mean that it was used in the 15th century. A famous example for this is Birch-leave with iron mordant, It gives a lovely green. But we lack evidence that this combination was used in the period.

We recommend you obtain a colour chart from a company who specialises in dying cloth naturally (see source list)

① **Hans Memling**, c. 1470 - Scenes of the Passion of Christ - Galleria Sabauda, Turin (Foto Manon Dieters)

② ⑬ **Tapiserie** de la collégiale Notre-Dame de Beaune -life of Mary, 15th century (foto Manon Dieters)

③ **Robinet Testard**, c. 1500, (Burgundian coif), Book illumination, France, , Illustration for:Matthaeus Platearius, Le Livre des simples médecines, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg

④ **Dieric Bouts**, c.1455 - Passion Altarpiece central panel - Museo de la Capolla Real, Granada

⑤ **Petrus Christus**, c. 1455-60, Lamentation, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel

⑥ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1445-50 - Seven Sacraments Altarpiece, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

⑦ **Hans Memling**, c. 1485, Bathscheba bathing, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart

Headwear

For adult women, covering your hair is obligatory and needs no further explanation. The material to use is linen. Do not use cotton or a blend with cotton but use a finer kind of linen. There are many options for headscarves. The known Swiss and South German regional Fächerhaube is different from the Burgundian styles. The Burgundian styles are more nonchalant than the German styles.

First of all, your headscarf should be clean. You should therefore include several scarves in your wardrobe. If your scarf gets dirty or slides down, re-pin it or add a clean layer of linen.





The minimum size for a scarf is 80 cm / 45 cm. but as most styles have much volume you might need a larger one or use multiple layers with smaller scarves. A perfect size to make an elegant style is 45-50 cm / 3 metres. Just fold it, wrap the cloth round your head and pin it down. You will develop a personal style. In order to get a more voluminous headdress, you can use a filling. This can be made of a small roll filled with wool sewn on a cap. You can pin your scarf on this cap.

Another possibility is to wear the Burgundian coif. This is an ordinary, plain headdress, but very comfortable to wear.

The Burgundian style covers all of your hair; there are no visible fringes of hair or plaits. These are regional styles!

Apart from the plain cloth used for headscarves, there was also a frizzled veil. This veil is called Kruseler, or Ranse in the Flemish regions, or Tuechly in Alsace.

Basic belt

Belts were needed in order to attach your purse on. Iconographical evidence for this kind of belt is sparse. Although we do know of the existence of purses, so we assume that there was a basic type of belt for women. There are many findings of buckles with remnants of leather belts attached. Most of these belts are maximum 1.5 cm wide. Many of the examples had beautiful buckles, strap-ends and mounts. The materials used were pewter, brass, copper-alloy and bronze. Sometimes these materials were gilded.

Iconography shows us many examples of belts with chains and decorated round buckles. This seems to be a luxury item often worn over an overdress and was never used for attaching a purse.

The way to wear a belt on a dress is hanging loosely over your stomach, just below the waistline. The back the belt is at the waistline. You could also wear it under your dress.



⑨ **Jean Hey, Master of Moulins**, c. 1488, Meeting at the golden gate, National Gallery, London

⑩ **Hugo van der Goes**, c. 1470, Adoration of the Magi, Hermitage, St Petersburg

⑪ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1425, Deposition, Museo del Prado, Madrid

⑫ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1470, Portrait of a Young Woman, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin

⑬ **Anonymous Flemish Master**, c. 1440, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon (foto Manon Dieters)



Belts for gowns and houppelandes

This type belt is much broader than the one you wear on the basic dress. In pictures there are different widths visible, the broadest are approximately 9-10 cm and the narrowest are 3 cm wide. The broader the belt the more luxurious, as it takes a lot of silk and skills to make it. The actual width of the belt is a matter of anatomy. Women's bodies can be either short or long. The width of the belt depends on the "effect" on the wearers body. For one person this means a belt of 4 centimetres will give the same effect as one of 8 centimetres on another person. The broad belt should be worn under the bust and needs to fit as tight as a corset.

The material for these belts is silk. Many of these belts follow a line occasionally with checkered pattern, that would be in line with a tablet woven piece, with a SSSZZZSSSSZZZZ -pattern. Iconography also supports belts in a zig-zag pattern. This is tablet weaving and can be achieved by the same arrangement of the weft. but, with tablet manipulation (klappen) during the weaving process. We have not found any evidence of embroidered belts.

In the pictures there are elaborate buckles visible, but finding a correct buckle can be an adventure, though more and more artisans started making them.

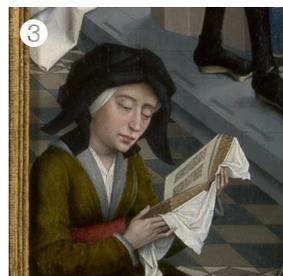




Dress Accessoires

Hoods

Hoods for women were only known in the Flemish-Dutch Burgundian- and English area. The 15th century women's hoods were open at the front without buttons and known only to civilian women.



They were mostly made of a thicker kind of wool although the use of multiple layers of cloth is another possibility. They have a liripipe and the front edge has a turned back brim or overlap. The liripipe can be turned around the head, as seen in men's hood-styles.

The hoods were worn over the headscarf and attached with pins. Iconographical evidence only shows red/ orange and black hoods.

① **Maitre de Saint- Jean-de-Luze**, c.1470, Potrait dit de Jeane de Montagu, Bourgogne 1470 Musee Dijon. (foto Manon Dieters)

② **Unknow artist**, c. 1475, Maria Magdalena onder het kruis, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht

Stockings

Stockings should be sewn from wool, cut on the true bias. Most popular are those made after the Thames textile finds, three-piece construction (Leg, sole and foot).

They should reach up to your knee and held up



with garters made of woven wool or silk, sometimes in leather.

Turnshoes and Pattens

Additional information concerning shoes and pattens can be found in the book from Olaf Goubitz.

There were also pattens with leather soles, the sole had a core made from cork. In the Netherlands they were called "Stillegangen".



③ **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1445-50 - Seven Sacraments Altarpiece - Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

④ **Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung**, late 15th century, Le Roman de la Rose, in a manuscript made for Louise of Savoy, mother of Francis I, with many miniatures in the style of Robinet Testard, French, late 15th century. MS douce 195-illumination, France, Bodleian library, Oxford

⑤ **Bastia Mondovi**, c. 1472, Chiesa di San Fiorenzo (Fresco) Episodes from the Life of St Anthony





Drawstring pouches or satchels

Small bags for women are a rare item in iconography. We know by the exceptional pictures that they existed and were in use, maybe mostly worn underneath the dresses. Satchels for women are small, maximum the



size of your hand. They were made out of one rectangular piece of cloth or leather. Findings show us satchels made of tablet woven strips, leather or combinations of materials. Some of these pouches were lined with silk or linen. There are just a few findings of embroidered pouches. They seem to have been a luxury item, and while appearing in 14th century context, they all disappeared in the 15th century.

⑥ patten, Utrecht restaurated by **O. Goubitz**. Private Collection. (picture Manon Dieters)

⑦ **Tacuinum Sanitatis** - BNF Ms. Latin 9333 Date: Rhineland, mid- 15th century. fol 21v Kapern

⑧ **Robinet Testard**, c. 1500, (Burgundian coif), Book illumination, France, , Illustration for: Matthaueus Platearius, Le Livre des simples médecines, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg

Buttons

Buttons were used for all kinds of fastenings, to close sleeves, dresses and at the cuffs from pinned on sleeves. Buttons were made of pewter, brass or bronze. These cast buttons were solid with integrated or added shanks. Another alternative are buttons made of cloth. The small ones were made from a circular piece of cloth of which the edges were gathered by a thread. Buttons were the height of fashion in the 14th century, when we approach the 15th century, they were out of fashion already some decades ago.



Laces

Laces were used for all kinds of fastenings, as the solution of choice. A lace should be made in the technique of finger-loop plaiting. The Lucet or Dünteln (2-loop-crochet) was not in existence yet.



⑨ Small square. Flat silk **purse** with 2 tassels at the bottom and a drawstring at the top. The silk has faded to a beige colour. 15e Italian Museum of Londen

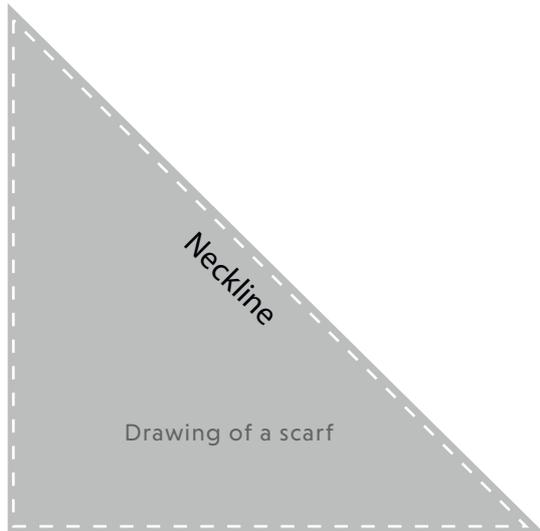
⑩ **Petrus Christus**, c. 1455-60, Lamentation, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Brussel



Dress Accessoires

Neck scarves

When looking at the 15th century iconography it often seems as if the shift is higher than the neckline of a dress. In this case you do not see the shift but a scarf. Sometimes scarves were nicely folded in pleats over the shoulders. For a scarf you use a supple linen or a thin, almost transparent wool called etamine. The basis pattern for a scarf is a triangle. See below.



Tricks and Tips!

- If a pattern looks odd, do not change it! It is supposed to look like this.
- Do not use commercial patterns. Make your own, or find a friend who can help you with making the right fit. Commercial patterns are a waste of money.
- Ask the mulberry dyer or Farbehof for a colour chart. It makes it easier to choose the right colour of cloth.
- Trade scraps with friends, to obtain fabric for sleeves or a small bag.
- Do not be afraid of piecing! Extant textiles show an absurd amount of piecing, even in high-status clerical textiles. The value of the garment lies in the fabric, not necessarily in the work.

① **Rogier van der Weijden**, c. 1450, Maria Magdalena, Braque Family Triptych (right wing) ca. 1450, Musee du Louvre, Paris





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Campbell, Lorne, p. 297 en 298, Rogier van der Weyden, 1400-1464, *De passie van de Meester*, Waanders uitgevers, Zwolle, Davidfonds, Leuven 2009

Piponnier, Françoise & Mane, Perrine, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1997

Sophie Jolivet, *Costume et dispositif vestimentaire à la cour de Philippe le Bon de 1430 à 1455*. 2003.

Suppliers:

Headscarves

link: <https://neheleniapatterns.com/produkt/handgewebtes-leinen-fein-2/>

Kruseler-Ranse-Tuechly: Silvia Wiechman (Munchen): Sylvia.Wiechmann@Damasthandweberei.de

Wool & linen

Michael Kappmayer offers good wool, dyed in shades that mimic natural dyes very well, and would only call "chemical" if the natural dye is held next to it (e.g. his indigo looks great, unless you hold true indigo next to it). He not only offers very decent wool, but also linen for underwear. link: <https://www.naturtuche.de>

Fustian/Barchent

Susanne Gross has a weaver at hand and offers fustian (bargent) to decent prices about 3-4 times a year. link: <http://mittelaltersuse.com>

Silks

Bevilacqua di Venezia offers handwoven silk brocades and velvet. It is "the Real Thing" but comes with a hefty price tag.

link: <https://www.luigi-bevilacqua.com/en/company>

For the plain silks:

link: <https://www.zijdewinkel.nl>

Pins

Link: <http://www.mittelaltersuse.de>

Link: <http://www.armabohemia.cz> (has also points)

Buckles & buttons:

Ludmilla: <http://www.gothic-cast.com.ua>

Esther Kalkman: <https://www.zilverlinde.nl>

Shoes & Pattens:

Stefan Schneidewind

Jurjaj Mateijk - NP-Historical Shoes

Patterns:

Basic patterns ready for adjusting to your own size. Sizes S, M, L & XL. Manon Dieters- Link: www.hadewijchhilligenbacker.nl Mail: manon.dieters@telfort.nl

Colour chart:

link: <https://www.faerbehof.de>

link: <https://www.mulberrydyer.co.uk>



