

Renaissance Faire garb element - ladies' skirt

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<http://www.burdastyle.com/projects/renaissance-faire-garb-element-ladies-skirt>



Every spring, there is a huge Renaissance Faire in the very next town over from me, and every year more and more people go and have a lovely time in the imaginary village. Plus they sell roasted turkey legs! So this year I determined to go. Faires are set in different times and places, and the authentic clothing of that setting would be the most appropriate thing to wear. This particular faire is set in the late 1600s in England, so when researching clothing I stuck to that period. I chose to make peasant clothing because I only had about 2 weeks to make everything. I did all of my research online, although there are several very good books on the subject in print. the overall project consists of the following elements: male biggins female biggins jerkin bodice chemise male shirt thing shin wrappings male hat breeches/slops underskirt Needless to say the past few weeks have been a sew-fest, as the Faire is this coming weekend. To our modern eyes, these are not the most becoming clothes in the world – they are not particularly fitted or

body-conscious – an element of many folk patterns! The typical skirt of the time period for a peasant would have been as full as she could afford, gathered onto a waistband, without pockets. It would not have been floor length, but rather hit about mid calf. It would have been completely hand-sewn. I did not make a full-on, museum quality reproduction garment, but one that would appear to a casual observer to be fairly authentic. I did add elastic to the waistband for comfort but I put it in the front where it would be covered completely by another part of the outfit (rather than in the back as is standard on most RTW.)

Materials

Fabric of the period would have been linen, wool, or linsey-woolsey, fairly coarse hand spun and dyed with vegetable dyes. I chose a cotton sheeting cloth in a color that might have been created using madder and indigo dye baths. In the very late 1600s they discovered buttons, which they used copiously. The upper classes used metal buttons but the lower and middle classes used wooden buttons covered with fabric. I covered some manufactured plastic buttons with cloth to duplicate this look.

Step 1 — Cut the fabric

Cut at least 2 skirt panels, as wide as your fabric is wide, and as long as the measurement from your waist to your mid calf. If your fabric is very narrow, (36 inches) you would cut 3-4 panels. If your fabric is very wide (54-60 inches) you would cut only 2 panels. If it is 45 inches wide, you might choose 2 or three based on your frame.

Trim off the selvages so that they cannot draw up and distort the seams.

Cut a waistband piece, 3.5 inches wide and the length of your waist measurement at the point you want the skirt to ride plus 2 inches.

Step 2 — Sew the side seams

Place right sides of two panels together and seam up a 1/4 inch seam along the LENGTH side of your fabric piece (the one where the selvages were). Finish seam as desired (serger, zig-zag, etc. Alternately you could use a french seam instead, which would be more authentic.

Repeat with the remaining panel(s), laying them right sides together and seaming up the length. On the very last panel, use a 5/8 inch seam allowance, and stop sewing the seam about 5 inches from the top. Backstitch. The area between this stopping point and the top will be your opening to get into the skirt. Turn under 1/4 inch along each of these edges, then turn under one more time. Top stitch about 1/4 inch from the edge, pivot 1/4 inch below the backstitching, and back up the other edge. Finish this seam below the opening with your preferred method.

Step 3 — Hem the skirt

At this point you should have a huge tube. Either end can be the top or bottom, unless you have used a one-way fabric. Pick an end to be the bottom, and turn under a 1/4 inch hem. Machine stitch right along the edge of the seam, or hand stitch with a slip stitch.

Step 4 — Interface the waistband

If your fabric is very thin, you may want to interface the waist band. You can do this in several ways. For a very authentic method, you can fold the waistband in half, and then lay a piece of 1-inch twill tape above the fold and baste it down. Or you can put iron-on interfacing 2.5 inches wide centered on the waistband strip. Or you can put sew-in interfacing or another piece of broadcloth along

the same 2.5-inch center area of the waistband and baste it down. Mark your waistband thus: With the interfacing at the top, measure in 1 inch on the left end of the waistband and make a mark. Measure in 1/4 inch on the other end and make a mark. Fold the waistband lengthwise matching these two marks and make a mark at the fold. Fold the middle mark to the end marks and mark where the two folds are. Then on the waistband you will have 5 marks.

Step 5 — Gather the skirt onto the waistband

Now you have a huge tube hemmed on one end and with a slit opening along one seam at the unhemmed edge. Run gathering stitches along the panels of the skirt, 1/4 inch and 3/8 inch from the raw edges of the top of the tube. I like to interrupt my gathering stitches at each seam to make it less likely that they will break and make gathering more convenient, leaving long ends on the thread at the beginning and end of the stitching. Then mark your tube into quarters, putting the slit at one mark and dividing the rest of the skirt up evenly so that you have 4 marks. Turn your entire tube inside out so that the wrong side is facing out and the slit is on your right. The side closest to you is the back of the skirt. The half with the shorter end (1/4 inch) is the back of the waistband. Match the two marks at the ends of the waistband to the two edges of the slit with the interfaced side along the raw edge of the skirt and pin. Match the other 3 marks to one another and pin. Now carefully draw up the gathering threads so that the gathers are evenly spaced. Work on one section at a time to keep things manageable. Pin thoroughly. Baste with a 1/4 inch seam. Check to see that the gathers are even and make any changes. Sew with a 1/4 inch seam.

Step 6 — Finish the waistband

This step is just a little bit tricky. I wish I had a photograph for you. Sew (don't baste) along the long raw edge of the waistband at the 1/4 inch mark. Press under long edge along sewing. Now fold the waistband in half right sides together. Sew along short edges of waistband from the point where the slit enters the waistband to the fold. Back-stitch. Trim this seam and the corners of this seam, but not too closely. Now turn the waistband back so that the right sides are together. Fold the gathered edge of the skirt up so that it is inside the waistband. Pin the waistband along the lower edge so that the lower edge rests along the gathered seam line. Top stitch on the outside, along the lower edge of the waistband, making certain to catch the inside edge into the top stitching. Or hand stitch the inside edge of the waistband down with a slip stitch. Now the waistband is attached and it is time to add your fastener. You can either add a button hole or two, or you can use hook and eye or waistband hook as is your preference. You will have a 1 inch overlap in which to place your fastener.

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