

Washer's Garb Guide

For those of you who are veterans of Faire, all of this should look familiar. The big thing to keep in mind is that the Washer's are peasants. Clothing should be simple and made from basic fabrics like plain cotton, linen, and wool.

Here is a list of items that you should have if you are going to be a washer woman:

- Chemise / Shift
- Bloomers
- Socks
- Skirts (2)
- Bodice
- Belt
- Shoes
- Head Covering
- Hat
- Apron
- Cold Weather Items: (please see list below.)

Here is an explanation of each of these things:

Chemise or Shift

A chemise should be anywhere between hip length or knee length and should have long sleeves that reach the hand. Chemise are made of white, off-white, or natural color cotton, linen, or a blend of these. A chemise should gather at the neckline and wrists, preferably with a drawstring but elastic is also acceptable. The sleeves and neckline can be gathered into a simple flat band, or have a small ruffle.

Bloomers

These should be gathered at the hips or natural waist and fall just below the knee, where they can gather with a ruffle, simple band, or end in a straight hem (this will depend on how voluminous they are). They can be made of any color that is Faire approvable, and should not have any patterns, or stripes. Use cotton or linen. Bloomers can also be made from cotton pajama bottoms that have been cut off at the knee.

Socks

Socks should be knee high and cotton or wool. Wool is encouraged, as it will dry faster and keep the washer-foot at bay. Again, colors should be in the approvable range, as socks show from beneath your skirt. But, socks do not have to match!

Skirts

Should be made of cotton or linen, should reach somewhere between the high ankle and the top of the foot. Skirt waistbands should be at the natural waist so that they fit under the hem of your bodice. There shouldn't be a gap between your bodice and your skirts.

Bodice

Bodices can be front or side laced, front lacing is more common. They should be made of a heavy cotton like duck, twill, or canvas: the fabric should not have stretch. Ideally lacing holes should be couched grommets, or handmade eyelets.

Belt

Belts are leather or rough canvas and should fit around the natural waist on top of the bodice. They are useful as a way to hold up an apron, and to keep a belt pouch and your tankard on hand.

Shoes

Shoes should be simple, rustic, and neutral colored. Flats, mary janes, or boots are good options. Covered toes are required. No obvious zippers, velcro, or snaps. Buckles are acceptable as long as they are simple. The less hardware the better. Choose colors such as brown, black, grey, and tan. Choose materials such as leather, faux leather, canvas, and cotton. Stay away from the obviously modern.

Head Covering

Have at least one. Biggins, head scarves, and kerchiefs are preferred. Simple light cotton in basic colors, no patterns unless they are hand embroidered such as black-work or cross stitching along the edges. No muffin caps, unless there are no other options between that and bareheaded. Note: If hair is dressed in braids and ribbons, no head covering is necessary; this is usually reserved for young girls and festival days.

Hat

You should have a hat to go over your head covering. It can be a large or small brimmed hat in either wool or straw. Hats should have a simple domed head, with either rounded or square corners. Hats can be adorned with flowers, leaves, ribbon, etc. to spruce them up.

Apron

Aprons should be a rectangular piece of fabric in white, off-white, natural, or brown. They should attach around the waist with a tie, or by being tucked into your belt. Aprons should be as wide as your hips, and not wrap around you at all. They should end someplace around your knees, just above or below depending on preference.

Cold Weather Clothing:

Shawls, ponchos, or cloaks are encouraged for colder days. They can be made of linen, cotton, or wool. Shawls can also be crocheted or knitted from single color yarn (no multi-colored yarn should be used).

Here is some more information for people who want it:

Notes on historically accurate clothing:

Kirtles are acceptable, and should be a single color; you will still need an underskirt. Things that are more historical-minded are encouraged and welcomed: simple partlets, bodice plackets and sleeves are good additions to a Washer's garb.

In general it is good to note that there are many things about Faire Garb that are not historically accurate, but are acceptable because they are expected styles made popular by Renaissance Faires over the years. For example: the muffin cap, low necklines, and striped socks. There are some things that the Washer's, as a guild, embrace (low necklines!) and parts that we try to stay away from (muffin caps, striped socks...).

Some more historically accurate, fairly simple changes that are encouraged are:

- Chemises in only white and off-white
- Biggins, head scarves, and kerchiefs instead of muffin caps
- Aprons

A Note on Wear and Tear:

Washer's have a number of different theatrical behaviors that are not kind to clothing. If you plan on being rambunctious, wet, muddy, and generally dirty, please keep in mind what that means for your garb and plan appropriately. Many members bring more than one of everything and have multiple bodices and skirts, and most especially extra socks and bloomers. Nothing is more uncomfortable than wet clothing on Sunday morning.

If you don't have the time or money to make multiples now (or ever), please consider staying relatively dry and clean on Saturdays and only going hog-wild on Sundays when you will be headed home at the end of the day.

A Note on Fabric Choices:

For the same reasons as above, please also consider making your clothing with sturdy materials and stitches.

Linen vs Cotton:

Cotton stays wet longer, and is more liable to tear when wet, it also keeps heat in and does not breathe as well as linen.

Linen is generally more hardy when wet and otherwise, it breathes better in the heat and insulates in cool weather, and dries much more quickly.

If it is possible for you to find linen/cotton blends, or 100% linen fabric, there is benefit to choosing those over 100% cotton fabrics.

If there are any questions regarding information listed, or not listed, here please contact the Washer's costume mistress: **Janine Hart**. She can be found in the Washer's Group on Facebook, or by emailing sainthunna@gmail.com with the subject line ATTN: Costumes.