

SHIRTS

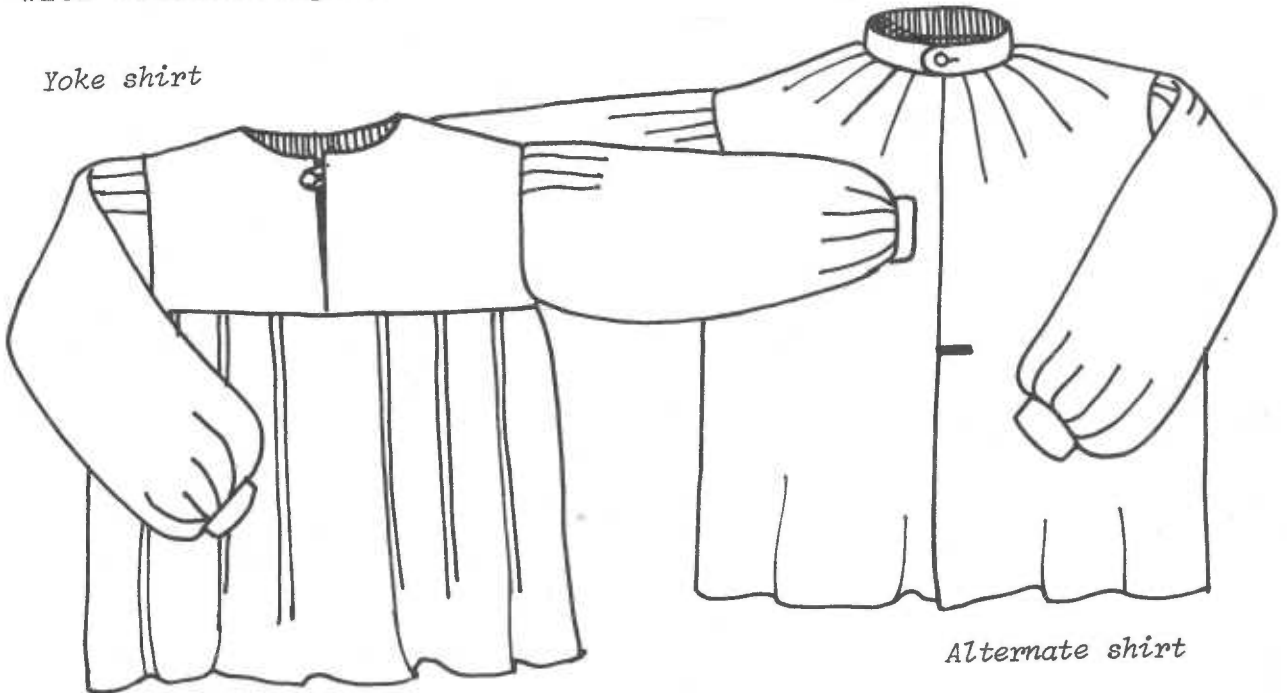
Shirts were worn by all men of all classes. The fabric they were made from, and the complexity of the designs were dependent on the man's station in life and the work he did..

One kind of shirt for a peasant man looked exactly like a woman's high-necked drawstring shift or chemise. If you want to make that kind of shirt, we suggest that you consult the instructions for making the shift in the women's clothing section. We have also experimented with the chemise type shirt based on the clown-suit pattern as a shirt for men. While it is not as historically accurate as the others, it is easy to make, and fits well under doublets. Consult the women's section for directions on this shirt as well.

A great men's peasant or farmer's shirt already exists as a commercial pattern. Folkwear pattern #102, the French Cheese-maker's Smock is a wonderful, traditional peasant shirt and is ideal as it is, with no alterations necessary.

The other two main designs for men's shirts are described here below. As you can see from the picture, the main difference between the two shirt styles is that the first type has the fabric of the body of the shirt gathered into a yoke, and the second type has a straight body type, with no yoke. They each have their advantages and disadvantages, and are both historically proper. Either shirt might have no collar, a flat collar, or a standing collar. For the higher classes, the shirt would have neck and wrist ruffs attached to the standing collar and cuffs. These shirts always had long, full sleeves gathered into cuffs which tied or buttoned, and the neck was usually tied shut, too, with "bandstrings".

Yoke shirt

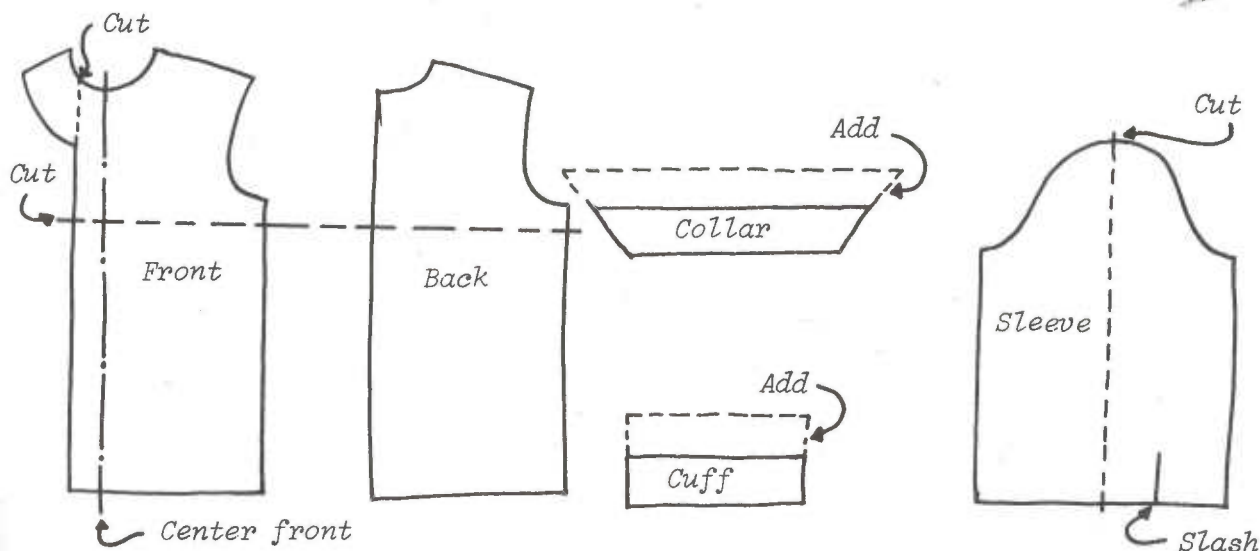


Alternate shirt

To make any of these shirts, we strongly suggest that you use a 100% cotton (muslin) or other natural fiber for comfort's sake, for a very simple reason. Natural fibers breathe. Polyester and poly-blend fibers do not. This may not seem very important to you until the mercury hits 90 degrees in the shade, if you could find any, or the stage lights are toasting you well done. But then it will be vitally important to your health and comfort to have something that you can sweat into, that will carry the moisture away from your skin, instead of insulating you like artificial fibers do.

Yoke Shirt

In order to make the shirt with a yoke, you will need a man's regular shirt pattern of the correct size. See the pattern section for a picture of the suggested shirt type to help you in selecting the right pattern. Your shirt will need only the pattern pieces illustrated here. Remove them from the rest and stuff the remaining pieces back into the envelope so you won't lose them. You might need them someday. So far, so good.



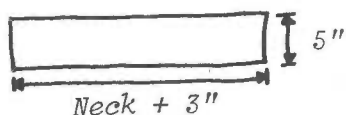
Take the front pattern piece and draw a horizontal line all the way across it 8"-10" down from the top of the center front. Now, draw another horizontal line 10"-12" down from the center back on the back piece. Cut your pattern pieces along these lines. These pieces are your yoke pattern. Add 1" to the top edges of the pieces you cut off and those will be the pattern for the body of the shirt. The sleeve pattern piece should be cut in half lengthwise and spread to widen it, and the cuffs should also be cut a little wider.

For a flat collar, called a falling band, use the collar piece that came with the shirt and extend it several inches to give it a more period look.

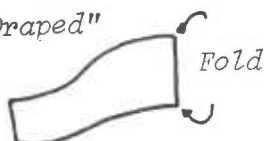
For a standing collar, either cut the corners off of the collar piece you have, or design one that will fit better. To do that, cut a pattern piece out of plain paper 5" wide and your neck measurement plus 3" long. The bottom of the collar piece should curve a little so that the collar will fit into the neck opening better, and the back should be a little higher in the back than in the front. This will look better, even if it sounds harder, and will prevent you from choking yourself when you lower your chin.

High collars

Plain

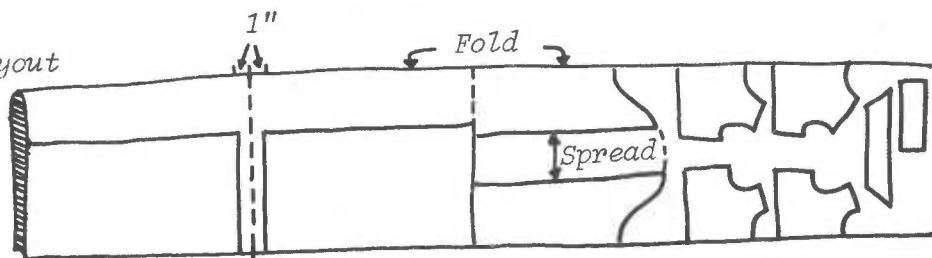


"Draped"



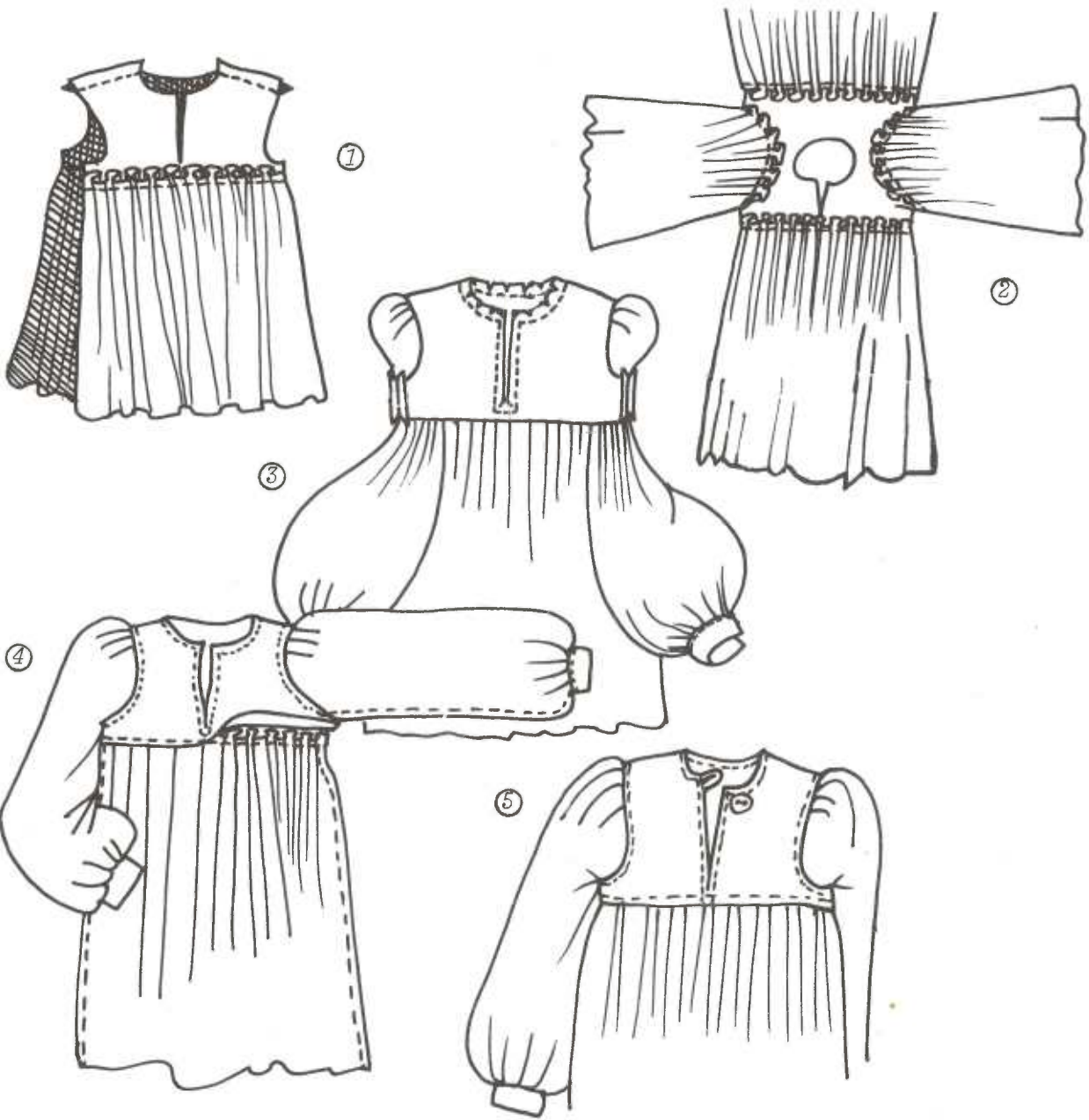
Lay out your pattern on the cloth approximately like the picture, which assumes 36" wide muslin fabric which has been pre-washed. Better it should shrink before you cut it, rather than after you have made the shirt and washed it afterwards. Adjust the layout for wider fabrics or larger sizes. Cut two sets of yokes. One set will line the other. Lay out the lower body pieces so that the sides are on the selvage edge and there is a space between the center front and center back edges of the pattern and the fold of the fabric. This will make extra fullness below the yoke. When laying out the sleeve pieces, spread them as far as you can to get a lot of fullness in them. Cuff pieces and collar, if you have one, should be interfaced, but the yoke will not need to be.

Fabric layout

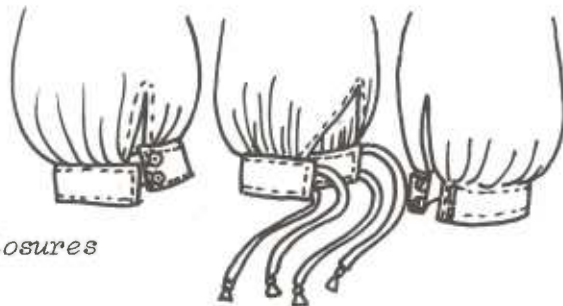


Slash the end of the sleeve pieces to 3" up from the edge and halfway toward the back of the sleeve from the underarm seam. Turn under the edges of the slashed part twice and sew. Do the same for the other sleeve.

1. Sew together the front and back yoke pieces at the shoulder seams. Do it again for the yoke lining. Gather or pleat the lower body pieces onto the yoke pieces.
2. Then gather or pleat the sleeves into the armholes.
3. Sew up the shirt side seams from the sleeve end to the armpit, then from there to the hem.



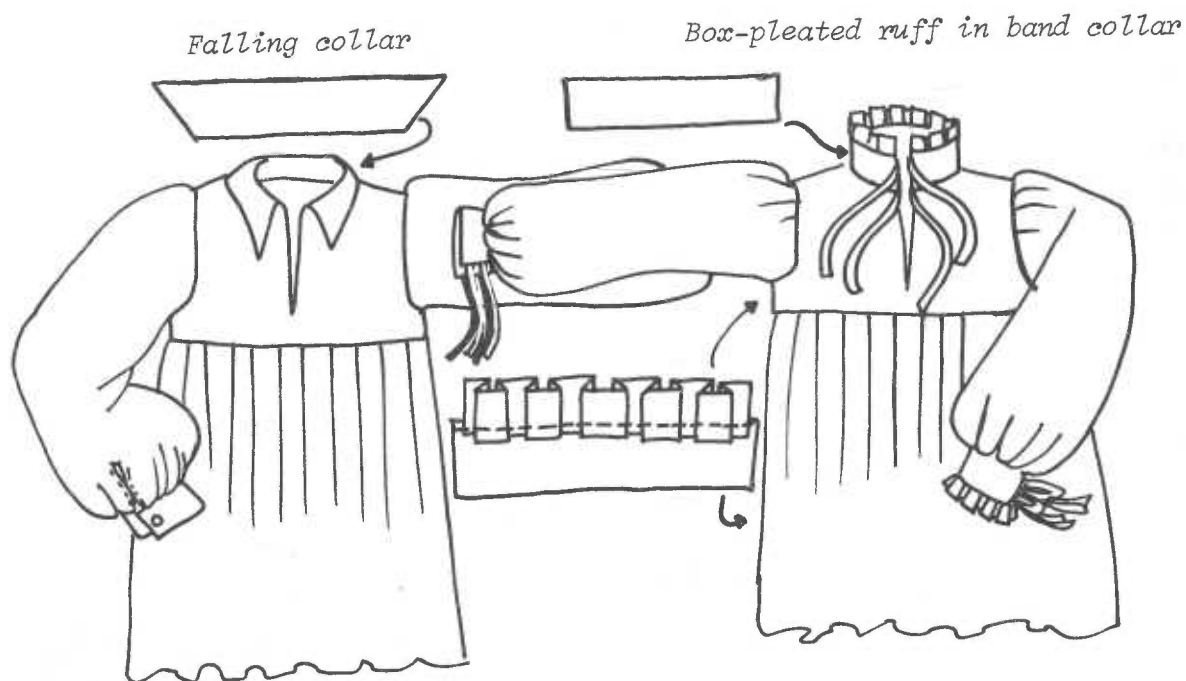
4. Now, gather or pleat the sleeves into the cuffs, and finish the cuffs with invisible flat hooks & eyes, buttons and button loops, or ribbon ties.



Sleeve closures

For a shirt with no collar, take the yoke lining and lay it over the yoke with right sides together. Sew up one side of the neckline, around the neck, and back down the other side. Clip the curves and turn the lining to the inside. Press under the remaining edges of the lining $\frac{1}{2}$ " and sew by hand or machine. Finish off the top of the neck with a button and button loop, hidden hook & eye, or ribbon ties.

5. For a shirt with a flat or standing collar, the collar is finished and sewn into the neck opening before the yoke lining is applied. The lining is then attached as above. If built-in neck and wrist ruffs are desired on the high-necked shirt, sew a double row of box-pleated lace or self fabric to the edges of the collar and cuffs. This is best done before sewing the two collar pieces or cuff pieces together. Hem the shirt and it is finished.

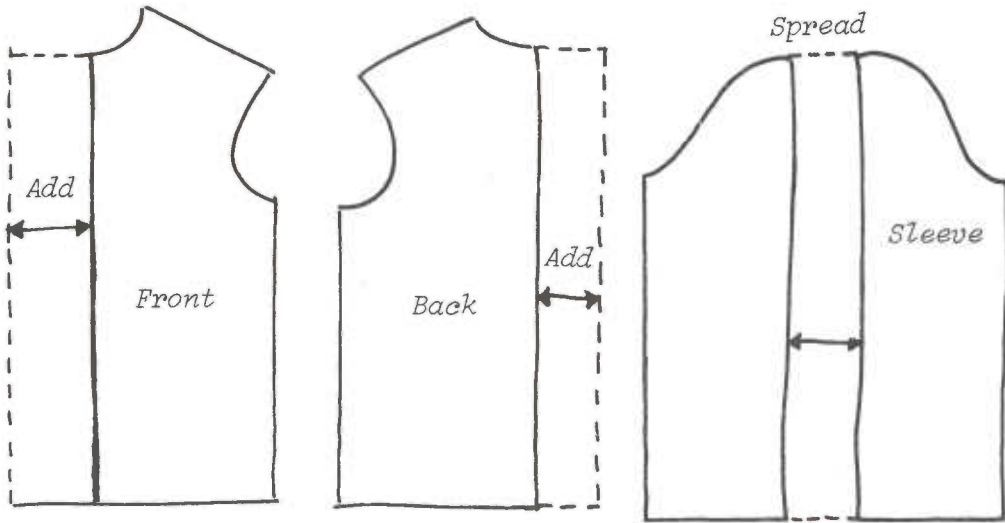


Alternate Shirt

For the other kind of shirt, you will need less fabric and will not be cutting the pattern apart as for the first type. Lay out the pattern pieces as shown. The sleeves should be kept very full, but there will be less fabric in the body of the shirt. The neck is cut larger and will need to be gathered slightly into the collar, if you want one; or a simple collar band, if you don't. All the collar and cuff instructions are the same.

This shirt is based on a picture of an actual 16th century man's shirt. It had several rows of blackwork embroidery down the front of the shirt, down the sleeves, and on the collar and cuffs of the shirt. It was sewn halfway up the front and had a placket behind the ties which closed the neck opening. The cuffs also were fastened with ties.

This kind of shirt might be better worn under a tight-fitting doublet, where you would want less bulk in the body section. Since this style is a little more restrictive than the other type, it would be worn more by nobles, than by the working classes.



Alternate shirt pattern

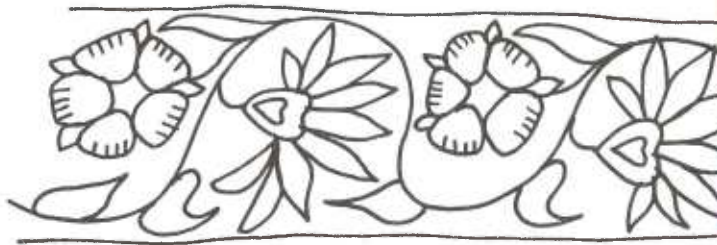


Illustration of 16th century shirt with blackwork embroidery