



St. George Productions

General Costuming Guidelines

This is the first in a series of costume guidelines for St. George Productions. We hope this helps to guide you in the construction of your costume.

The most recent updates to this document may be found at <http://www.stgeorge-va.com/costuming.htm>.

1. Submit a drawing with fabric samples and receive approval BEFORE you spend lots of money on fabric.
2. We are dressing in the Elizabethan styles from approximately 1560 to 1585. Look at portraits from those years. We dress according to our social station--we are to few to confuse the audience with anomalies. The highest-ranking characters are dressed in the richest clothing, etc. (Notice "clothing" and not "costume", for that is what it is.)
3. Think natural fabrics as opposed to synthetic.
 - a. Cotton and linen for underpinnings is a must so that they can "breathe".
 - b. Blends for outer layers work fine.
 - c. Velvets--cotton, or cotton blend--no acetate
 - d. Brocades--NO PRINTS--only woven patterns
 - e. Silk--dupioni, raw, china--not sandwashed--too lightweight
 - f. Wool--yes, wool. A good breathable fabric. G Street Fabrics has beautiful, finely woven wools, not all of which are outrageously priced.
 - g. Corduroy--waleless or a very fine wale. Good for knightly rank
4. Colors--rich-looking without being neon bright.
 - a. Jewel tones, dark shades for main color, accent with lighter, brighter hues.
 - b. Black on black is only for Puritans and scholars.
5. The NO list. These are not to be used in any fashion.
 - a. Purple or neon colors
 - b. Crushed stretch "velvet"
 - c. Bare arms
 - d. Uncovered heads
 - e. Plastic
 - f. Glueing on of jewels
 - g. Zippers

- h. Print fabrics
- i. Bangs (for hair styles)
- j. Colored nail polish
- k. Folding fans
- l. No visible piercings (except one in each earlobe)
- m. no unnatural haircolors
- n. no visible tattoos
- o. no visible eyelet fabric

6. DECORATION AND TRIM: There is no such thing as too much. Pgings, ribbons, bands, guimps, used in combination add texture and interest. Buttons are fine--metal, wood, fabric-covered, bone--*not plastic*--and use lots of small ones.

Items that are *fixed to the clothing* are dependent upon county rank. Notice that we're talking about those things that are sewn to the costume, not pins, baubles, chains of office, etc.

The following county ranks should adhere to the limitations imposed by the sumptuary laws. However, you can decorate your clothing with items from higher stations if, ***and only if*** your character is wealthy and could afford paying the additional tax, which was quite large.

Earl, Countess and above	Think gold, metallics, faceted jewels, pearls--but no clear rhinestones (diamond cutting was in its infancy)
Barons/Baroness	Fewer and smaller stones, but lots of pearls and gold beads
Knights and Ladies	Sorry, NO faceted stones. Use metallics as a small accent--no gold--think silver, copper, and bronze, there are great metal studs at Rhinestone Guy--the kind with the prongs on the back to set in as decoration. Simple beads, pearls, lots of guimp and ribbon
Others not mentioned above	Consider rough to fine fabrics, vary colors to draw attention away from the fact that your character cannot afford as much as nobility/peers.

- 7. SHIRT/CHEMISE: cotton, linen, silk--white or cream--no colors (black will be approved on a case by case basis). Full sleeves and body, high neck--ties or buttons at throat and wrists. Blackwork is encouraged. Ladies' chemises may be decorated with pearls, trims, etc. Unmarried ladies wear the open triangle, married ladies, closed.
- 8. SLEEVES: Think puffed, slashed, decorated may match or contrast doublet/bodice removeable (except for long, hanging kind) tie or button in--5 points is the norm (I like to put the ribbons on the sleeves, some like the ribbons on the doublet/bodice. Use picadils, epaulets, shoulder rolls to hide closure. Hanging sleeves should be closeable or have detachable sleeves underneath.

9. **HOSEN: OPAQUE!** Men, get the thicker type made for male dancers. (If you are wearing venetians, you can get away with stockings, available at Colonial Williamsburg, or on line at one of the places I referenced last.) **NO SKIN SHOWS.** They can be colored to match your outfit.
10. **SHOES/BOOTS:** sturdy leather, comfortable--look at period styles. Boots are to be worn with slops only, men. Ladies can wear a plain black boot, if so desired.
11. **RUFFS:** Highly encouraged, though not required (especially for those who find the style uncomfortable). The figure 8 was the most common. Use lots of lace--**HERE SYNTHETIC IS PREFERRED OVER NATURAL** for it will hold its shape. White, with gold or silver trim. No open ruffs (later period).
12. **JEWELRY:** Avoid wearing everything you own at one time. Sleeves and bodices should not be covered with an assortment of mismatched brooches. Do not cross the line from rich and elegant to gaudy. (Too many pins, and it really reads as costume Jewelry). More than 3 rings per hand is overdone. Religious jewelry: Protestants--a cross, Catholics--a crucifix. All other religious symbols must not be visible. **NO DIAMONDS.** Be careful the pieces do not look too Victorian. Enameled jewelry is period. Miniature portraits are great, but must hold up to close inspection. Earrings--women--one pair, men--only one, a hoop or hanging pearl.
13. **GLOVES:** Encouraged--leather or sturdy cloth, decorated. Men, if you're wearing gloves, they would be gauntlets and not wrist length. If you're wearing a rapier, odds are that you would wear gauntlets nearly all the time.
14. **DRINKING VESSELS:** ladies--a goblet, men--either a tankard or goblet.
15. **FANS:** No folding fans, feather fans tied so they hang where the hand falls naturally.
16. **EYEGLASSES:** if you must, simple wire frames
17. **VARIOUS ACOUTREMENTS:** Avoid hanging everything you own from your belt. Use a basket or a servant (if you have one). Men, two pouches maximum. Perhaps find one large pouch that has compartments that you can separate mundane items from your character items. Better yet, carry the absolute minimum of mundane items that you need (car key—not entire key ring, cash, 1 credit card—only if you plan on purchasing something, and your ID.)
18. **WEAPONS:** With the exception of the Yeomen, limit your steel--you should not have more than a rapier, main gauche and eating dagger. Nobles have no cause to carry any replica firearms—the protection of the monarch for the most part is the responsibility of the Yeomen and they would carry the firearms. Very high nobility might not carry any weapons at all. Yeomen can and should look like walking armories, but not at the expense of being encumbered to the point that it becomes troublesome to keep everything in or on the belt.

Costuming Resources

As always, be sure to check the links on our website for the latest contact information for costuming resources, manuals, etc. Our website can be found at <http://www.stgeorge-va.com>.

Books

Elizabethan Costuming for the Years 1550-1580 by Janet Winter & Carolyn Savoy
ISBN 0-9630220-0-8
Other Times Productions
\$15.00

Jewels

Rhinestone Guy
<http://www.rhinestoneguy.com>
888-594-7999

Fire Mountain Gems
<http://www.firemountaingems.com>
800-355-2137

Boning

Greenberg & Hammer
800-955-5135

Feathers

Ostriches on Line
<http://www.ostrichesonline.com>

Odds & Ends

Jas. Townsend & Son, Inc.
<http://www.jastown.com>
800-338-1665 (They are mostly 18th cent., but have stuff we can use--socks-to wear with venetians, boning, cloaks, books, patterns)