

1490 AD Italian

Chemise is of white cotton batiste.

Under gornea is of white linen. The bodice fastens in front with spiral lacing. The skirt hem is trapunto quilted to give it stiffness.

Overdress of blue cotton. The bodice laces on the sides. The sleeves are tied into the bodice shoulders. There is an opening from the elbow to the wrist.

Tabard of gold brocade.

Hair is pulled back into a long braid down the back. It is in a braid casing.

Headdress is a simple coif.

Shoes are simple slippers with a flat sole. They are worn with brightly colored hosen.

Accessories include a fabric belt of a contrasting color to the dress.

Jewelry includes a simple beaded necklace and as many rings as can possibly be worn. Earrings were simple drop pearls.

GENERAL NOTES

This particular style of dress was popular throughout the Italian Peninsula from approximately 1470 to 1540. My research has been predominately focused on Venice and Florence, but this type of gown was also seen in other Italian cities such as Rome, Genoa, Sienna, and Milan.

Italy during the Renaissance was divided into the five great city-states of Naples, Milan, Florence, Rome, and Venice plus many smaller areas. The geography, politics, trade, history, customs, and wealth of each area influenced the fashions of that area. Clothes made of certain materials, or cut so that a great deal of material was used, were reserved for the use of the aristocracy, extremely wealthy, or those people holding high office. The wearing of jewelry was also restricted both in the cost of the jewelry and the number of jewels that could be worn at any one time.

Noble women no longer needed to make their own fabrics and sew their own clothes. Fabric was purchased from merchants and a tailor that was attached to the noble woman's household designed clothes. Families also employed an embroiderer who was a household servant.

The Italian dress was a natural development from the houppelande. The style finally reached its full development during the 1490's. The waist remained high and used a belt. The bodice began to be cut separately from the skirt and lost the fullness that characterized the houppelande. The general silhouette was smoothly rounded in the bust that was achieved by the use of a sleeveless under gown with a stiff, tight bodice.

Italy had a concept of a wardrobe of three garments. The sumptuary laws already mentioned regulated the number of wardrobes permitted by any person. Members of the middle class ordered a new set of garments each year.

The wardrobe for a woman includes a loosely fitted sleeved garment called a chemise. It generally reaches to the ankles or mid-calf. Chemise sleeves became wider toward the end of the century. The chemise neckline should match that of the dress.

The dress consists of a bodice and a skirt, joined at the waist by a seam. The bodice fits smoothly and can be fastened in a variety of ways - down the front, down the back, or on the sides. The waistline is set slightly below the bust but gradually lowered until at the end of the century it set at the natural waistline. The skirt is either pleated or gathered round the waist. Women frequently wore two dresses. The under dress fits fairly closely and the overdress is constructed so as to not completely hide the under dress but allow it to be seen at the front.

For formal occasions a third dress in a tabard style is worn. This dress is cut in the shape of a segment of a circle and hangs freely from shoulder to hem, reaching the instep. It is open completely in front and frequently is also open on both sides.

Fifteenth century style dresses are lined exactly to the edge so that the dress is virtually reversible. This has the advantage of being very neat, doubles the amount of clothing, and the lining serves as a trimming.

In the fifteenth century, no woman could appear in public with her arms uncovered. "In public, even on an informal occasion at least two layers would be worn, the chemise, dress, and if the costume included both an under dress and over dress" then the arm was often covered by three sleeves, at least two of which extended to the wrist." (Birbari 72) Sleeves were detachable and sometimes were even interchangeable. The sleeves were always cut so that the seam that ran from armhole to wrist was on the outside of the arm.

There were many sleeve designs. From the large open-mouthed sleeves and bag-like sleeves that were closed at the wrist, sleeves gradually shrank in size. One sleeve style is just a long tight tube. Sometimes the sleeve is not cut wide enough to encircle the arm but is joined in back by ties. Occasionally there is just an opening in the elbow area to allow the arm to bend. Another style of sleeve consists of an upper and lower part joined at the elbow. The upper part fits loosely over the arm and is gathered, at the elbow, to the tighter lower part. By the end of the century many sleeves, especially in Venice, were cut into different segments which were then attached to each other by ties.

Italian women of the period were fascinated with altering their appearance. False hair, often of white or yellow silk was frequently worn. The ideal hair color was blonde.

Cosmetics were used liberally to alter appearances. They used beautifying waters, plasters, and paints for every part of the face including the teeth and the eyelids. Perfumes were used in excess and were literally applied to everything.

Any married woman used head coverings. This covering could consist of just the thinnest, most transparent veil. Other coverings were little nets that covered the back of the head, and occasionally turban-like pieces were worn. Frequently the veil would be wound in and around intricate hairstyles. A braid casing was frequently worn when the hair was braided in a single braid down the back. Occasionally a woman's hair would be braided with intricate ribbons and pearls intertwined in the braids.

Shoes were typically a simple slipper with a flat or slightly wedge-shaped sole. They may also have a strap across the instep.

Accessories include a girdle of some kind. Frequently this girdle was on a contrasting fabric to the dress fabric.

Jewelry included simple beaded necklaces or cords with simple charms or crosses dangling from them. Most women wore as many rings as possible. Sometimes there were more than one ring on a finger.

Pattern fabrics, usually velvets and brocades were more popular than materials of a single color.

MEASUREMENTS

Axilla	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
Raised waist to floor	_____		
Bust at largest point	_____	divide by 4 =	_____
Ribs (all around immediately under breast)	_____	divide by 4 =	_____
Waist (3" down from ribs)	_____	divide by 4 =	_____
From top of shoulder (over bust) to waist	_____		
Across shoulder	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
Top of shoulder to neck	_____		
Hollow of neck down to intended neckline	_____		
Across neck from hollow to hollow	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
From neck to raised waist	_____		
Shoulder point to elbow	_____		
Elbow to wrist	_____		
Axilla to wrist	_____		
Shoulder to wrist (arm bent)	_____		
Upper arm circumference (flexed)	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
Elbow circumference (flexed)	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
Forearm circumference (flexed)	_____	divide by 2 =	_____
Hand circumference (squeezed)	_____	divide by 2 =	_____

CHEMISE

PATTERN CONSTRUCTION

EACH STEP IS NUMBERED AND SHOULD BE MARKED ON THE PATTERN AS THEY ARE USED. THESE NUMBERS WILL SERVE AS REFERENCE POINTS. Equipment needed: paper, tape measure, pencil, T-square ruler and/or yardstick. You will need the following measurements.

1. Mark the shoulder point, by measuring the distance of the shoulder (after division) horizontally from the edge of the paper. (Label this dot #1)
2. Draw a straight-line 2" toward the center and up 1/4", and make a dot.
3. Mark the neckline (front).
4. Connect point #2 with point #3 to make the neck.
5. Measure down from #1 the distance of the shoulder point to the axilla.
6. Measure down the axilla onto the pattern in a "j" curve, with the lower edge intersecting the chest measurement at point #5. (Label the intersection point #6.)
7. Measure down from the axilla the number of inches to the ribs and place a dot.
8. Measure down from the ribs to the raised waist and make a horizontal line across the paper.
9. Mark the waist measurement on the horizontal line drawn in step 8. Make a dot at the intersection point.
10. Draw a line connecting dots #6, #7, and #8.
11. Measure from line 9 to the desired length of chemise and draw a horizontal line.
12. Add seam allowance to all edges.

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.

6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

With right sides together, stitch back to front at shoulders.

Step 2

(see [1330 AD Gothic Fitted Dress](#) steps 7-11 under "Sewing Directions") Sew facing.

Step 3

Pleat or gather along sleeve tops and stitch sleeves to chemise body.

Step 4

With right sides together, stitch from wrist to hem on each side.

Step 5

Hem bottom of chemise and make drawstring casings for the sleeves.

UNDERDRESS and OVERDRESS PATTERN CONSTRUCTION

BODICE PATTERN

- Mark the shoulder point, by measuring the distance of the shoulder (after division) horizontally from the edge of the paper. (Label this dot #1)
- Draw a straight-line 2" toward the center and up 1/4", and make a dot.
- Mark the neckline (front).
- Connect point #2 with point #3 to make the neck.
- Measure down from #1 the distance of the shoulder point to the axilla.
- Measure down the axilla onto the pattern in a "j" curve, with the lower edge intersecting the chest measurement at point #5. (Label the intersection point #6.)
- Measure down from the axilla the number of inches to the ribs and place a dot.
- Measure down from the ribs to the raised waist and make a horizontal line across the paper.
- Mark the waist measurement on the horizontal line drawn in step 8. Make a dot at the intersection point.
- Draw a line connecting dots #6, #7, and #8.
- Add seam allowance to all edges.
- For a closed front, double the pattern piece.
- For the back, raise the neckline up. Double the pattern if for a closed back.
- For a "V" shaped front draw a line from #2 to the center front waistline.

SLEEVE PATTERN

- On the straight edge of the paper, make a mark for the top of the shoulder.
- Measure down the number of inches from shoulder to wrist and make a dot.
- Connect point #1 and #2.
- At a right angle from line 3, starting at #2, mark the number of inches for the hand.
- Connect point #2 and #4.
- Measure down from the shoulder to the elbow and draw a horizontal line.
- Measure, and mark the number of inches for the elbow on line 6.
- Halfway between #6 and #4 mark the number of inches for the forearm (remember this is measured from #3).
- Connect points #7, #8, and #4.
- Measuring up from #4, and following line 9, mark the distance from axilla to wrist.
- Draw a horizontal line from #10 to connect with line 3.

- Draw a shallow "S" curve, the length of the axilla, from point #1 to line 11, and place a dot at the intersection point.
- Connect point #12 to #7.
- Add seam allowances. This is a very tight sleeve.
- For chemise sleeves follow these same directions except make the sleeve a straight tube the diameter of #8.
- The basic sleeve pattern can be used for many variations.

LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

Remember to cut all pieces on the grain, not the bias.

BODICE AND DRESS LAYOUT

Step 1

Make pattern using directions above.

Step 2

Cut out front and back bodice pieces along length of grain of fashion fabric. Cut back and front pieces as one piece.

Step 3

Repeat step 3 using canvas.

Step 4

Repeat step 3 using lining fabric.

Step 5

Measure from waist to floor and add 2" to measurement. Cut panels of skirt material straight across, from selvage to selvage at that measurement. Cut four panels at least. The more panels, the wider the skirt.

SLEEVES

Step 1

Cut 2 sleeves and 2 linings. The lining can be of a contrasting fabric for reversible sleeves.



CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

8. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
9. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
10. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
11. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
12. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
13. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
14. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

SEWING DIRECTIONS

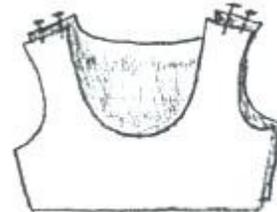
BODICE CONSTRUCTION

Step 1

Baste canvas to wrong side of fashion fabric.

Step 2

With right sides of fashion fabric together, sew front and back shoulder seams.



Step 3

Repeat step three with lining fabric.

Step 4

With right sides together, sew lining to bodice on each side. **Do Not Sew Up Armholes.** Trim seams to 1/4" and snip corners.

Step 5

Turn wrong sides together and press along seam line.

Step 6

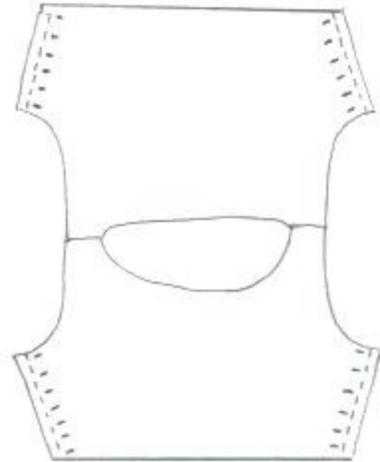
Machine sew a line 1/2" from all four of the side edges. This provides a casing for the boning.

Step 7

Using the casing line as a guide, place buttonholes (or grommets) about 2 inches apart down both sides of the side openings. Make sure they match each other.

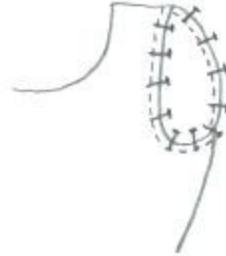
Step 8

Slide boning into casing along back seam. Note: If you plan on having attached sleeves then skip Step 11 and follow directions in the sleeve section for finishing armholes.



Step 9

Armhole Finishing - Turn both bodice and lining fabric to inside and pin around armhole. You may need to clip the curve so it lies properly. Hand sew lining to bodice using small, hidden stitches.



SKIRT CONSTRUCTION

Step 1

Sew skirt panels, right sides together along selvages until you have two equal pieces. Sew the two large pieces together, leaving a gap of about 5" at the top to allow for the side opening.

Step 2

Pleat the skirt into the bodice. Divide the total width of the skirt by 4, and then divide the bodice into 4 parts. Pin the skirt fourths to the bodice fourths so you know how much skirt material must be pleated into each bodice part. Divide the number of inches in the skirt width by the number of inches in the bottom seam of the bodice. No matter how you do it, pleating comes down to a matter of patience, trial and error.

Step 3

Machine sew the pleats into place. Be careful to sew them to the bodice fabric only and not to the lining fabric. Trim seam to 1/4".



Step 4

Press seam selvage up into the bodice. Turn under edge of bodice lining and hand sew to skirt seam, securing bodice to skirt and finishing bodice.

Step 5

Hem bottom of skirt.

Step 6

Repeat process for an over dress.

VARIATIONS ON NECK CLOSURES:

Back closure: Cut back piece into two sections. Be sure to add a seam allowance to the center back. Finish the seams in back just as the side seams, inserting the boning at the seam and using buttonholes or grommets for the lacings.

Front closure: Change the closure from the back to the front. Cut the back in one piece and the front in two pieces leaving a seam allowance in the center front. Finish the seam in front just as the back, inserting the boning at the seam and using buttonholes or grommets for the lacings. You can leave the front skirt open or sew it up as you did the back, leaving an opening so you can get in and out of it. You will want to sew hooks and eyes at the bottom of the opening where the skirt attaches to the bodice.

"V" Neck closure: Draw a line from the edge of the neck to the center front waist on each side of the front pattern. Add a seam allowance. Cut this piece out of the bodice copy. Insert boning along each side of the "v" rather than straight down the front. Use buttonholes, grommets, or hooks to fasten the bodice.



SLEEVE VARIATIONS

ONE PIECE OPEN AT ELBOW

Step 1

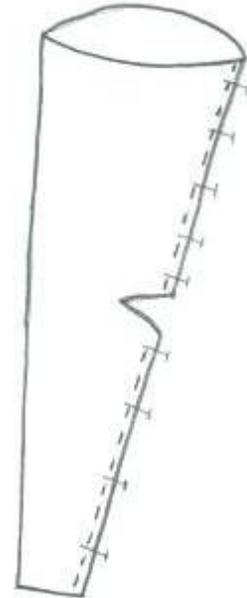
Sew side seams on all sleeves. Leave the elbow opening unsewn.

Step 2

Clip and turn outer and lining edges inside of sleeve and stitch closed.

Step 3

Turn lining right side out and place inside of outer sleeve with right sides of fabric together.

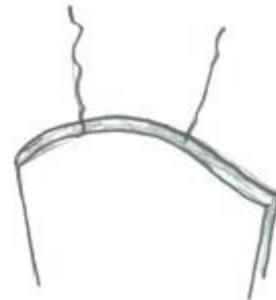


Step 4

Place cord between the two sleeves at center top. Place two other cords 2-3" on either side of center cord. Sew along top of sleeves. Reinforce stitching at cording.

Step 5

Turn sleeve right side out. Turn under opening at elbow for both lining and outer fabric. Slip stitch closed.



Step 6

Turn up each wrist hem and whipstitch together.

Step 7

Sew cord onto bodice shoulder.

SPLIT DOWN TOP LENGTH

Step 1

With right sides together, sew lining to outer fabric along outside edges.

Step 2

Clip and turn lining to wrong side.

Step 3

Place cord between the two sleeves at center top. Place two other cords 2-3" on either side of center cord. Sew along top of sleeves. Reinforce stitching at cording.

Step 4

Turn up each wrist hem and whipstitch together.

Step 5

Join sleeves at scalloped edges. Place decorations as desired.

Step 6

Sew cord onto bodice shoulder.

TWO PIECE SLEEVE

Step 1

Pin cord onto outer fabric at top and bottom of each side. Add cord to middle if needed.

Step 2

Pin cord to center top etc. following Step 4 above.

Step 3

With right sides together, sew all four sides leaving an opening to turn fabric right side out. Clip corners, turn, press, and whipstitch opening closed.

Step 4

Sew cord onto bodice shoulder.

TABBARD CONSTRUCTION

PATTERN CONSTRUCTION

EACH STEP IS NUMBERED AND SHOULD BE MARKED ON THE PATTERN AS THEY ARE USED. THESE NUMBERS WILL SERVE AS REFERENCE POINTS. Equipment needed: paper, tape measure, pencil, T-square ruler and/or yardstick. You will need the following measurements.

LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

Remember to cut all pieces on the grain, not the bias.

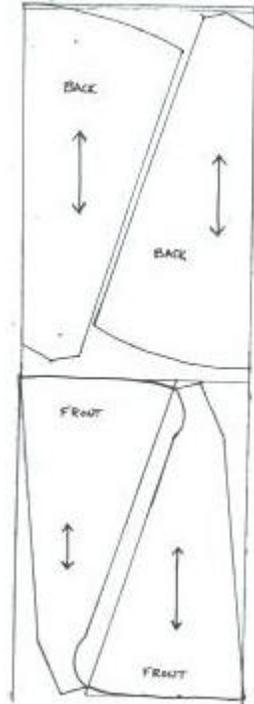
Step 1

Cut two of each pattern piece. The lining can be of a contrasting fabric.

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.



SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

Sew center back seam.

Step 2

Sew center front seam.

Step 3

Attach front and back at shoulders.

Step 4
Repeat for the lining.

Step 5
Combine the fashion fabric and the lining together with wrong sides together. Hem sides, neck and bottom edges by either using self binding or by turning each raw edge to the inside and blind stitching together.