

Formal Clothing: Formal clothing retained traditional features long after such designs had gone out of style for daily wear. The persistence of old-fashioned design elements in formal clothing is called "fossilization." Gowns were made with wide hoopskirts half a century after side hoops had gone out of fashion for general wear. Men wore embroidered suits with knee breeches for formal occasions long after breeches were replaced by long pants for daytime wear.

Everyday Fashions: People from every social level owned everyday clothing. For relaxing at home and going about daily business, wealthy men and women chose clothes that were more comfortable than their fashionable or formal garb. Manual laborers dressed in garments suited to their activity. They modified fashionable styles by shortening the skirts on their coats or gowns or by making the garment looser. They used accessories to protect their clothes and bodies from abrasion.

Women's Everyday: During the 18th century, a woman's status was evident in her choice of clothing materials and the quantity in which they were used. Did her clothes have beautiful trimmings, such as lace and needlework? How many dresses did she own? Were they elegant in style and fit? People who had to do physical labor modified the elegant styles of the period for greater ease of movement, durability, and affordability.

Though based on fashionable garments, but made in cheaper materials, working women put on shorter garments that required less fabric than a full gown. These included short gowns, bed gowns, and jackets. Neck handkerchiefs, gloves, and mitts protected women's chests and forearms from exposure to cold or excessive sunlight. Further, kerchiefs offered greater modesty when fashion dictated low necklines. Workers and older women especially relied on such accessories.

Men's Everyday: Besides using sturdy textiles for their everyday clothes, men added comfortable, protective accessories. Instead of tight stocks around their necks, many men wore generously sized neck handkerchiefs or neck cloths. Fabric leggings protected the shins.

Men of nearly all social levels wore frock coats for informal activities or work. With their less-restrictive cut, plain materials, and turndown collars, the coats were comfortable and practical. During the last quarter of the 18th century, fashionable men began to wear frock coats of more expensive fabrics for dress wear.

Livery: Some work clothing was more symbolic than practical. Visible male servants such as waiters and footmen were often required to wear elaborate livery uniforms. The suits were usually made of wool in two colors based on the master's coat of arms and were embellished with elaborate woven edgings called "livery lace."

Dressing For Age: Fashionable clothing was modified to fit the individual's age, changing body shape, or life circumstances. Judging from period portraits, mature women covered more of their bodies than younger women. They wore caps, kerchiefs to fill in the necklines of their gowns, and mitts on their arms. Mature men sometimes continued to wear knee breeches long after trousers came into fashion. Older people often became more conservative in their dress, wearing styles that had been fashionable in their younger days.

Infants: As their first layer of clothing, infants wore thin shirts and "clouts," or diapers. Some infants were also swaddled, or tightly wrapped in bands of fabric. Although swaddling was intended to encourage straight limbs and erect posture, it also rendered infants immobile. The practice of swaddling gradually died out during the second half of the 18th century.

Children: It is often said that children dressed like "miniature adults" in the 18th century. Indeed, the clothing in prints and paintings does appear to reflect adult fashions, just as some children's clothing today echoes adult fashion. Nevertheless, overt and subtle symbolic elements of children's styles marked them as youthful to people of their own time—signals people today may miss. A ruffled shirt collar marks an eight-year-old as a little boy. Similarly, a ten-year-old girl wears stays and a tight gown, making her look grownup to 21st-century observers. A back-fastening gown, however, was the style of a girl, not a grown woman.

Skirts apparently had an unspoken symbolic value in 18th-century society. Skirts symbolized children's dependence, in the same way that adult women, all of whom wore skirts, were also dependent on their husbands or fathers. People who wore pants (men) were the dominant members of the family and society. Skirts also had practical value for the mother of a child who was not yet fully toilet trained; it was easier to keep the child clean if clothing did not fit closely.

A New View of Childhood: During the 18th century, a philosophical movement began to affect children's clothing. Parents began to view children as individuals whose clothing needs were unlike those of adults. People were ready for a less formal lifestyle, overtly affectionate family relationships, and a new view of childhood as a separate stage in life. This trend was in part spurred on by the writings of philosophers, educators, and physicians, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, and Dr. William Buchan. Increasingly, children dressed in clothes that were more comfortable, practical, and suitable for an active young person.

Frocks: It is often difficult for modern viewers to determine a child's gender in paintings and prints from the 18th century. Little girls as well as boys wore skirted frocks or dresses and stays. The laced torsos of boys echo the feminine cone shape of the girls. As a result, there appears to be little, if any, difference between the clothing of girls and boys. Nevertheless, subtle clues, such as hairdo, collar treatment, or a masculine toy used as a prop allow modern viewers to determine the gender of the child.

Boy's Suits : The change from skirts to breeches was a big event in a little boy's life. Occurring anywhere from four to eight years of age, depending on the time period and the family's desires, breeching symbolized growing up and moving from the female domain to that of males. Although little boys usually shed their stays when they graduated to breeches or trousers, girls continued to wear them into adulthood.

Boy's clothing underwent a significant change during the 18th century. Gradually, comfortable, washable suits with trousers replaced uncomfortable suits with knee-length breeches. One style, called a skeleton suit, had the trousers buttoned to the jacket.

Mourning: Following a death, survivors signaled their grief and honored the memory of the deceased by wearing special clothing and accessories. Proper mourning clothing also reflected on the status of the deceased. For those who could afford them, mourning clothes followed the cut of the current fashions, except made in colors and specialized materials considered appropriate to the occasion.

The first stage of deep mourning required black textiles without gloss or shine. Second mourning clothes (worn about six months after the death) could be made of shinier textiles and lighter colors, often gray, purple, white, or dark prints.

During the early 19th century, some women adopted white and black for their mourning clothing. Merchants advertised for sale accessories such as mourning fans, mourning ribbon, suits of mourning ruffles, and mourning buckles. Scores of gloves made of chamois or lambskin were distributed at large funerals.

Accessories: Through centuries past and into the present, accessories have been put to practical and fashionable use. From head to toe, people have worn hats, kerchiefs, shawls, gloves, ruffles, aprons, purses, wallets, and jewelry and shoes as part of their ensembles.

Handkerchiefs: Printed handkerchiefs are sometimes called "snuff handkerchiefs," because their designs helped hide the stains from the popular finely ground tobacco that people sniffed.

Other varieties of handkerchiefs were also in use. People used pocket handkerchiefs of white, colored, or checked linen or cotton to wipe their faces and noses. Women also used neck handkerchiefs, or kerchiefs, as fashion accessories. Often beautifully embroidered in decorative patterns or made from expensive sheer materials, neck handkerchiefs were large squares or triangles worn around the shoulders to fill in the low necklines of gowns.

White work: In an era when laundry was done by hand and textiles had to be ironed without the benefit of electricity, snowy white accessories were signs of gentility and status. Gentlemen wore white stocks around their necks and shirts with delicate ruffles at the front and on the cuffs. Ladies accessorized their clothing with pristine sleeve ruffles, fine linen or cotton

kerchiefs around their shoulders, and elaborately embroidered white-on-white aprons that were never intended for cooking or working.

Metallics: People of the past wore glittering accessories for beauty, fashion, and status. Although some people wore items made with genuine silver, gold, and precious stones, many others owned accessories that achieved a brilliant effect less expensively, with substitutes such as paste, a type of hard and brilliant glass stone, colored enamels, and metal coated with a thin layer of gilding, rather than solid gold. Gold and silver threads were usually constructed of thin strips of the metal wrapped around a core of silk or linen. These metallic threads were more flexible for stitching or weaving and required less of the expensive metal than solid wire.

1600s-1700s:

During the 17th century, costume accessories became increasingly available from shops and milliners. Accessories were made by men and women who specialized in a particular type of object or even one small portion of an object: lacemakers made collars and ruffles to be sewn to shape by seamstresses or housewives, shoemakers made shoes of fabrics woven by silk weavers, buckles for fastening the shoes were made by silversmiths and goldsmiths, and fan decorators painted leaves of fans, while the sticks were carved by a different local craftsman or imported from overseas.

The 17th century was a period of expanding worldwide trade. Goods from as far away as India and China were brought into Europe, England, and the American colonies.

1700-1750s:

Women's gowns during the first half of the 18th century had cuffed sleeves ending around the elbow and full skirts. After a period of high hairstyles around 1700, hair was eventually worn close to the head. In addition to their basic garments, women of all social levels relied on accessories to add function and style to their ensembles. Shoes could be plain sturdy leather or delicate brocaded silk with high heels and pointed toes. The ribbon-like garters used to hold stockings up might be plain or embellished with woven decoration. Although some aprons were made of plain linen to keep the skirts clean while a woman was working, others were made of gossamer textiles edged with lace, such as that worn in the painting of Deborah Glen (1964.100.1). Because of their beauty and expense, the more decorative accessories were preserved—and some eventually entered museum collections—while the everyday accessories were typically used up.

During the 1730s and 1740s, short decorative aprons were especially popular accessories. This was the period when women's fashionable skirts were at their widest, extended out from the hips with extra supportive hoops. The woman in the print (*Carwitham Floor Decorations*) wears a fashionable apron layered over her full skirt. Obviously not intended for cooking or cleaning, these aprons were made of silk embroidered with silk or precious metal threads.

Accessories such as jewelry, lace, and fans were important status symbols. Jewelry for the wealthy was made of genuine precious stones. Less well-off people chose paste, a type of hard

and brilliant glass. Stomachers, the triangular inserts at the fronts of gowns, were perfect places to display jewelry or metallic needlework designed to resemble jewelry. Lace was handmade by professional lacemakers from extremely fine linen threads. Expensive and elegant, the delicate lace required extra care to keep it clean and in good condition. Fans made of expensive ivory or less expensive bone were painted in a variety of subjects. Some women carried fans that commemorated current events to show their solidarity with a cause or to display their knowledge of the day's news.

1775- 1795:

From the late 1770s to the early 1790s, women's fashion called for hair frizzed out in wide, tall styles with corresponding large caps and hats, sheer kerchiefs puffed up at the chest, and full skirts held out at the back by rump pads. The whole effect was one of overblown fullness yet with a feeling of buoyancy because lightweight textiles had come into fashion. Some stylish women were the first to wear neoclassically inspired white cotton dresses during this period. Embroidery and painted designs on accessories often incorporated swags of flowers and bowknots.

Accessories responded quickly to changes in fashion. Their modest size meant that people could update an older ensemble with the addition of a few new accessories. As hairstyles got larger in the late 1770s, hats and caps changed in response. One innovation was the large calash, or collapsible bonnet, which was satirized (and exaggerated) by printmakers. Women's shoes continued to be fastened with buckles, although shoes were cut lower to reveal more of the foot. Shoe heels were shaped and curved.

1795- 1810:

Fashions changed dramatically around the end of the 18th century. Women began wearing slimmer gowns made of lightweight textiles that draped more closely to the body, sometimes without the benefit of heavy stays underneath. The waistline gradually rose to just under the bust. Although the styles appear graceful and modest by modern standards, they seemed shocking to some who were accustomed to 18th-century gowns with full skirts and covered bodices worn over layers of underwear. Traditionalists criticized the "naked" appearance of women's clothing and the warned against the danger of catching cold in such light garments. At the same time, most women continued to wear underwear, cloaks, and accessories to keep them warm. Shawls, which had not been used much prior to this, became a practical and elegant accessory. Hair was dressed more closely to the head.