

# Cutting out a 16th century shirt

*High-necked, long-sleeved shirt or chemise for a man or a woman, second half of the 16th C.*

**Material:** plain white or cream linen - 2.5m long and 110cm wide

The fabric shops on Hall Street in Otahuhu usually have suitable linen for \$4/m.

## **Decide:**

- Ruffles at the collar and cuffs, or plain edges?

- Gores or slits at the side?

Extant women's smocks often have extra triangular panels at the sides - comfortable with male or female clothing. Extant men's shirts often have slits instead - only comfortable with male clothing.

## **Cutting:**

**NOTE: where you cut to a body measurement, always add 2cm for seams**

Cut two collars (L: your neck measurement, W: height of collar + 2cm) (me: 35 x 8 cm)

Cut neck and wrist ruffles. Neck is one full fabric-width, each wrist is half a fabric-width.

Cut body panel: length of remaining fabric, about 65cm wide. Fold in half and mark shoulder.

Cut sleeves from remaining fabric width: about 45cm wide, and about 5cm longer than your arm.

Cut a rectangle about 80cm tall from remaining fabric. Fold it in half lengthwise, and cut along the diagonal. You will have one wide triangle (one side panel) and two smaller, right-angled triangles (sew the straight edges are together to get the matching panel for the other side).

From the remaining small rectangle, cut two squares (~15cm) for the underarms, two squares (~4cm) for the neck, and four cuffs (L: your wrist measurement, W: width of cuff + 2cm).

## **Variations:**

- Slits, not side-panels: cut collar and ruffles beside the body panel instead of at the end.

- No ruffles: just leave all the ruffles out.

- Double-layer under-arm panels: cut four instead of 2 - useful if you sweat a lot.

**This works for me: 166cm tall, bust 97cm, hip 106, shoulders 42, arm 60, wrist 15, neck 35.**

If you are much shorter, reduce length of body and side panels by 20-30cm. If you are much taller, allow an extra 20cm for longer sleeves. If you are much stouter (>110cm chest/bust), you may need a different layout (and more or wider fabric) so you can cut a wider body and wider sleeves.

## **For more information, see:**

Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 4: The cut and construction of linen shirts, smocks, neckwear, headwear and accessories for men and women, c.1540-1660.*

*Detailed information on surviving shirts and smocks. Katherina can bring a copy to Sewing Sunday on request.*

"Elizabethan Smocks and Chemises", by Drea Leed.

<http://www.elizabethancostume.net/chemise.html>

*Thorough article on 16thC underwear, for men and women. Many photos of surviving shirts.*