

Ancient Greek and Roman Clothing Information Sheet

Greek Clothing: General

Ancient Greek clothing was created by draping one or more large rectangles of cloth around the body. The cloth was woven by the women of the household, and the materials most often used were wool and linen. There were no set sizes to a piece of apparel. How the rectangles were draped, belted, and pinned determined how they fit the contours of the body and how they were named.

When seen on statues or in painted pottery, the clothing often appears to be white or a single color. In actuality, the textiles used for clothing were often dyed in bright colors such as red, yellow, green or violet. Decorative motifs on the dyed cloths were often either geometric patterns or patterns from nature, like leaves.

Wide-brimmed hats were worn by men in bad weather or while traveling in the hot sun. When not letting their long hair fall in trailing curls on their backs or shoulders, Greek women put their hair up in scarves or ribbons. Depictions of men in paintings and statues also show them with filets (cloth headbands) around their heads.

Though Greeks often went barefoot around the house, a variety of shoe styles were available, from sandals to boots.



The sandals worn by the statue of Artemis shown in full view on the next page.



Oedipus is dressed for travel in his wide-brimmed hat, cloak, and shoes.



Note that the reclining man shown on this cup has put his shoes underneath this couch and that the musician is barefoot. Both men wear headbands.



A woman with her hair wrapped in a scarf.

Greek Women's Clothing

The two most common pieces of clothing worn by women were the *peplos* and the *chiton*. Both are long tunics that reached from neck to foot. The chiton, a lighter outfit usually made of linen or a light wool, was created by folding a large rectangle so that half draped in front of the woman and half in back. A pin at each shoulder held the tunic in place. Multiple pins running down the top of the cloth from the shoulder to the wrist could create a kind of sleeve. To flatter the wearer's figure, belts or sashes could be placed at the waist, hips, or directly under the breasts. They could also be criss-crossed between the breasts. The difference between a chiton and a peplos was that before pinning, the cloth was folded over at the top, creating an extra "over-drape."

If the rectangle were too long at the feet to move freely, the cloth could be bloused up over the belts to raise the hem.



This statue of the goddess Artemis is wearing a chiton that has been belted both under the breasts and at the hips. The high belt and pins going down the arms of the chiton give the sections over the arms a sleeve-like appearance.

As the goddess of the hunt, Artemis does not wear her chiton to her feet, as a modest Greek woman would. Having the hem just at her knees allows her to run more easily.

The second piece of cloth that Artemis is wrapping around her as a cloak is called a *himation*. Himations could also be worn by men.

Here are two statues of the goddess Athena. Both are wearing a peplos. The over-drape is quite long in each case, going to the lower torso or upper thigh.

Over her peplos the goddess is wearing her *ægis*. This is a protective shield made of goatskin and fringed in snakes. After Perseus gave Athena the head of Medusa for her help in killing this gorgon, Athena placed the head on her *ægis*.

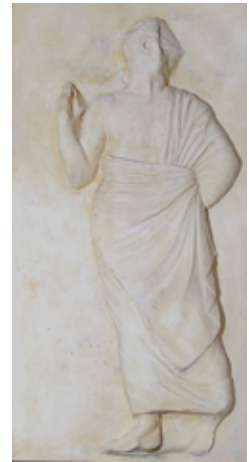
Note that even the small goddess Nike that Athena carries in her hand appears to be wearing a peplos.



Greek Men's Clothing

Three different styles of clothing were commonly worn by ancient Greek men:

The large himation cloak could be worn by all men as a cloak or by older men as a garment that wrapped around the lower body like a skirt and then came up over the left shoulder. The latter garment was not pinned in place.



A parade marshal in his himation from the Parthenon frieze.



The chlamys was a smaller, woolen cloak worn by younger men. It was draped over the left shoulder and pinned over the right shoulder.

Man modeling a reproduction chlamys from the book *Kostumewerk* by Karl Kohler.

Working men, who needed greater ease of movement, wore a chiton. Unlike women's chitons, those of men went only to the knees. As shown on the frieze sculptures here, the men could, if desired, attach the top of the cloth at one shoulder only or tuck the top of the cloth into the waist belt.



Horsemen in chitons from the Parthenon frieze.

Sources:

All pictures are of Spurlock Museum artifacts unless otherwise noted.

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