

Roman Hair Dressing

Statues of Roman women are renowned for their apparently complicated hairstyles. These hairstyles are often associated with particular empresses and indeed, the hairstyle often helps us to date the statue.

This workshop follows the work of Janet Stephens, an amazing hairdresser who has done a study of historical hairstyles. Her reconstructions are available on YouTube – and cover far more than just the Roman period (<https://www.youtube.com/user/jntvstp/featured>).

Here we have chosen 3 styles. All require long hair as this was typical for girls and women in the Roman world. They are also almost impossible to do for yourself, a reflection of the social status of women memorialised in sculpture. The hairdresser (*ornatrix*) will need at least one willing assistant, and a client. A hint: these styles work much better with slightly dirty hair as modern washed hair is rather too shiny and soft, and simply not sticky enough!

You will need: scissors (NOT for hair cutting – no hair cutting is involved), a comb, yarn the same colour as the hair, a *blunt*, preferably plastic needle, some hair bobbles, a bowl of water, and some hair pins (if you are unhappy with the idea of sewing hair).

The Tower Hairstyle

This hairstyle looks far more complicated than it actually is.

Bring all the hair up into a high pony tail, and divide the pony tail in two halves.

Make four plaits in each half, securing them at the ends by wetting the ends of the hair, and tying them with wool.

Once you have your two sets of plaits, take the first four sew them together to make one flat braid (1). You secure the thread around the pony tail and simply weave in and out of plaits to make the braid.



1. 2. 3. 4.

Take the braids and make a circle on the top of the head and sew into place by stitching the braids to the head hair, holding them upright as you sew (2,3). Tuck the ends under and sew them in. You will have a remarkably secure hairstyle (4). If you are not happy with the idea of sewing, you can use a lot hair grips for this part, but they are not quite as effective!

Watch a video tutorial for this hairstyle at: <https://youtu.be/vbmY6GVlieg>

For more detailed historical information see Janet Stephens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZF9YAcxq7M>

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A Young Girl's Hairstyle

Divide the hair into 4: take the crown to the front of the head as one piece, two side pieces and one at the back. You may like to secure the front piece with a bobble just to keep it out of the way as you work on the sides.



Plait each section with a single tight plait, wetting the ends and securing them with wool. Pull all the plaits up to the centre of the head and attach them together by sewing through them all and winding the wool around the join. Depending on how long your client's hair is, you will then have loose ends which you turn into a little tight decorative bun, again by sewing it together and attaching it to the head hair.

Watch a video tutorial for this hairstyle at: <https://youtu.be/kuxxAoIDQa0>

For more guidance on this hairstyle see Janet Stephens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDUA0ws2heA&t=75s>

Braided Ponytail of Agrippina

This style requires at least two helpers, unless you have a client willing to hold her own hair. Take all the hair apart from two small sections in front of the ears, to the back of the head.

With each of your front sections make a tight, twisted braid – this requires some tight holding. Half way down turn the twist into a plait and then secure the ends by wetting and tying with wool.

Take the back of the hair and tie it into a low pony tail, including your two side braids.

Divide the pony tail into five sections and create five tight plaits. Securing all the ends by wetting them and tying tightly.

Take four of the braids and tie or sew them together at the bottom and then tuck them into a loop, securing the underside at the base of the pony tail. You will need to do a little sewing here but not too much as you still have your fifth plait to deal with.

Pick you the fifth plait and wind it round the top of the plaited pony tail and secure it in place by sewing, tuck all the ends under and catch them together with a couple of tight stitches. This decorates the join and make a nice finish.



Watch a video tutorial for this hairstyle at: <https://youtu.be/LyyWmc4YY4s>

For more guidance on this hairstyle see Janet Stephens: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfMp9Tlvxwk>