

Dress to impress – How to wear your Roman toga

The toga is the garment we most associate with the Romans. It was worn on civic occasions by every male citizen from Marcus the retired centurion in Leicester to the emperor in Rome. It's the garment we see on thousands of statues and monuments across the ancient world.

The toga was a large garment. In the Roman world it would have been made of wool. It would have been made all in one piece and could have taken up to 12 to 16 square meters of material.

Once on the body, it was important it was draped well because it was worn without fastenings, without brooches and without pins, so dressing as a Roman citizen required quite a lot of skill.

Wearing a toga

This is job best done with three people (the wearer and two helpful slaves).

1. Drape the long straight edge of the sheet across the back of the wearer, with the centre at the back of the neck.
2. Bring the left hand side of the toga over the left shoulder so that a straight edge runs down the front of the body from the neck line.
3. One slave should carefully gather up the excess material covering the wearer's left arm so that the arm is free and the excess material folded onto the left shoulder. Make sure you keep the straight line of the toga down the front of the body at the same time (it takes a bit of practice to get this folding right).
4. The slave on the right side of the wearer should gather up the material which is on that side of the body, bring it under the wearer's right arm, across the front of his body and over the left shoulder.
5. As the toga passes across the front of the body make sure it drapes elegantly and the lower curves fall below the knee of the wearer.
6. For added tension, any excess material coming under the right arm and across the body can be rolled up as it passes under the arm (like you roll a towel around your waist when getting out of the bath).
7. Once this part of the toga is flung over the left arm, reach into the body and gently pull up from the inside, part of the material that is still lying straight down the left hand side of the body (2). Pull up just enough to create a small fold over the wound up material coming across the body.
8. The slaves should step back and survey their master and decide if he is fit to go out in public. At the same time the master should be able to feel secure in his toga and not worry about it falling off. The toga requires you to walk upright, to hold your right elbow into your body, and to use your left hand to adjust it as you walk.

You can watch a video demonstrating how to wear a toga here:

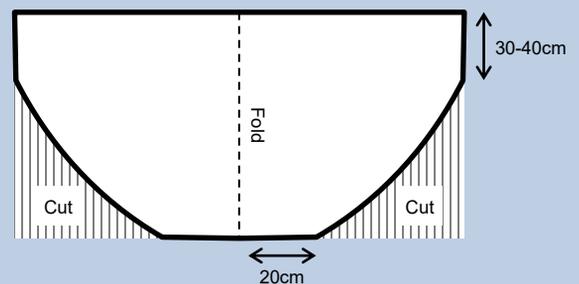
<https://youtu.be/0EyStjkiI-Y>



Making a toga

The toga is a semi-circular garment so the best way to make a very simple version is to take a flat bed-sheet and cut it to shape.

For children up to about age 10 a single flat bed-sheet will probably be sufficient. For older children and adults you will need to stitch two sheets together. The shape you require is:



If you are using a single sheet:

- Fold the sheet in half (width-wise), turn 90 degrees so the fold is now vertical.
- Mark out the curve in pen from about 30-40cm down the straight edge opposite fold. Note that it does not complete the curve, but ends in a straight edge about 20cm from the fold.
- Cut along your marked line with pinking shears and unfold your sheet – hey presto! – your curved corner will be mirrored once you unfold the sheet and you will have a small toga.



1-2



3-4



5-6



7-8