

How to make a chiton

The chiton was the basic garment worn by both men and women in Ancient Greece. The men's version was worn at or above the knee and often left open on the right shoulder. The women's version was usually secured over both shoulders. This open design kept the Ancient Greeks cool in the hot Mediterranean weather. Though usually fashioned of wool, it was later made of linen or silk. No sewing skills are required to make this simple garment, which consists of a rectangular piece of fabric, pinned at the shoulders and belted at the waist.

You will need:

A large rectangular piece of fabric (bed sheet)

A large brooch

Safety pins

A thin belt or rope

Gold ribbon or shiny material

Scissors



Work in partners. This will make the measuring easier. Together lay the sheet on a flat surface, like a table, with the long side at the top and bottom.

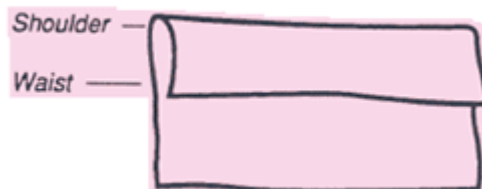
Lay the sheet lengthwise.



Fold the top edge down 30 cms

Measure your partner (the wearer of this chiton) from fingertip to fingertip with arms outstretched on each side. This will be the measurement for the width of the chiton.

Fold over the top for desired shoulder-to leg length.



Fold the sheet in half from side to side. The chiton will be open on one side. Keep the top fold flat and straight.

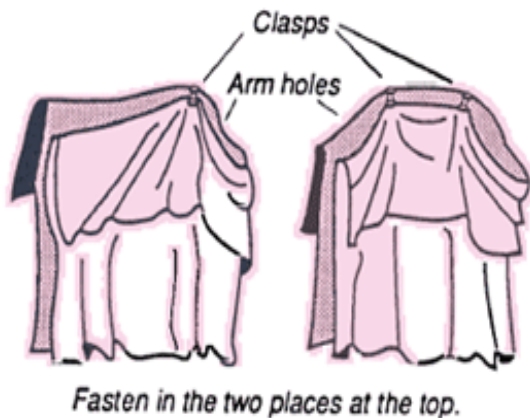
Measure the width of the folded fabric across the top edge. Mark the width the same number of centimetres as the fingertip-to-fingertip measurement. If you are not taking the bed sheet back home, trim off any excess fabric on the open side.

Fold in half.



Join the front and back by placing two safety pins through both edges at the top, spacing the pins so that a head and neck opening is created. If you are making a male version chiton, the safety pins should rest over the left shoulder. If you are making a female chiton, pin the fabric together over both shoulders with safety pins or brooches.

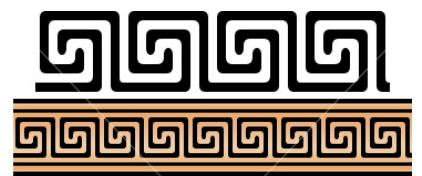
Tie the rope at the waist to form a belt. Pull up the excess fabric so that it drapes over the belt in even folds until the desired length is achieved. Trim off any excess fabric at the bottom.



Step 4: Wrap around the body and fasten on the shoulder. Secure with a cord around the waist.

How to decorate your Ancient Greek outfit

This woven band was part of the decoration on a chiton. Usually a linen chiton had bands sewn in a vertical arrangement on front and back (often down the middle) as well as towards the ends of the sleeves. The bands were often decorated with geometric patterns.



You will need:

Scissors

Gold ribbon or shiny material

Fabric glue

Permanent markers or fabric pens (black)



Lay your chiton on a hard, flat surface and mark out where you want to glue the ribbon. Use a pencil to do this. Usually the decoration ran across the top and bottom of the chiton and down the middle, from top to bottom. Glue ribbon or material strips onto the chiton. When it is dry, why not draw geometric patterns onto the shiny material? You might want to practice on a piece of paper before you draw onto your chiton.

Background Information on your chiton

Some Ancient Greeks wore a purple cloak called a Lacema. They were allowed to wear purple if their family was important (for example, if the Head of the family was a Senator). Purple was an expensive dye to make, as it was made from the fluid of a small creature found in the sea. Many creatures were needed to dye one garment, as each animal only had one drop of fluid.



Some Ancient Greeks wore silk. Silk was highly expensive because it had to be brought all the way from China. Purple silk was particularly expensive, so only very important people wore it. Ladies often wore a Palla, or shawl to protect their shoulders from cool breezes.



Some men wore gold stripes down their tunics to show how rich they were. If the tunics were made of fine, smooth cotton this also showed they were rich, because cotton was harder to obtain than linen or wool.

Poorer Greeks wore a basic chiton. They pulled them up at the belt so they could work more easily.