I. **Introduction**

The purpose of this class is to teach students, whether they are novices on a budget or experienced fighters, how to get garbed in a fashionable manner while complying with the Society’s Rapier Armor Standards. After all, it is a terrible insult to anyone to kill them while you are badly dressed. And it is in also very poor taste to die on the list field and leave a shabby corpse. During the course of this class we will discuss how to avoid such pitfalls.

II. **The Society Rapier Standards of Armor**

You can find the Society Rapier Standards of Armor on the SCA [website](http://www.sca.org). If you do not have web access, you can order a copy through your friendly neighborhood seneschal.

The Rules of the List can be summarized as follows:

- You will need armor made of *puncture resistant material*\(^1\) on your neck, head, torso, armpits and groin.

- The rest of your body must be covered by armor made of *abrasion resistant*\(^2\) material.

- You will need to wear a fencing mask, gloves, closed toe shoes, and have a 3-inch overlap between any separate pieces of armor.

- Your buttons must be close enough so as to not let a blade through between them.

- You must not show any skin at all.

- If you are fighting heavy rapier (*schlager, Del Tin, or similar type blades*), you will also need a gorget that will cover the front and back of your neck. In fact, it is highly advisable to wear a gorget when fighting melees as well.

- Men must wear hard groin protection.

- Ladies do not need to wear hard groin protection, but puncture-resistant will be fine. They also are encouraged to wear breast protection. Some prefer to wear rigid breast cups (about $8.00 a pair), others opt for chest plates (about $35.00), and I even know someone who swears by Victoria’s Secret padded bras. When shopping for breast protection, you may want to check also the Iron Rose Web Page, which features several links to merchants that supply breast protection for female boxers. On the other hand, some ladies don’t find any protection comfortable at all. It is ultimately up to you.
III. Getting Started Or To Sew or Not to Sew, That is The Question

The first question that you want to ask yourself is whether you are able to sew your own garb. Have you any experience with sewing? If not, are you willing to learn? Do you think that you cannot sew a straight stitch no matter how hard you try? On the other hand, are you a wizard with a needle but need to know about particular period patterns for your garb? The possibilities arising from these questions will be explored in this class.

- Help! I cannot sew to save my life!

If you are severely sewing impaired you may have to look into purchasing or commissioning your garb. There are many people out there who will be happy to take your commission or who cater to fighters. But whether you are purchasing or commissioning a garment, just remember that neither your merchant of choice, nor your sewing-whiz friend, are obligated to know your Kindgom’s Rapier Standards of Armor. It is up to you to tell them what you need and to make sure that your armor is legal. As for how to find a seamstress or tailor willing to take your commission, the traditional methods of asking around and/or posting an SOS to your local electronic lists are both effective. In fact, post it in as many lists as you can. A good place to start is your Baronial, Shire or Canton list. You may even make some discreet inquiries in the local or Kingdom costumer’s lists. You never know who may pick up the gauntlet...
• **All right, I commissioned my garb. Now what?**

Well, in that case you must make sure that the materials have been properly punch-tested by a warranted marshal *before* your friend puts your garment together. You may need to experiment a little with the combination of materials, but it is not complicated. Also, in the case of fencing shirts and doublets, you will want to inspect that the arm gussets are properly reinforced, and that the spacing of your doublet buttons is appropriate. The same goes for all pertinent overlaps. Remember, it is ultimately you who is responsible for making sure that your garb complies with armor standards.

• **What about adapting garb that I purchased?**

That can be easily done. For instance, if you have a regular period shirt that is made of a sturdy material in accordance with the standards, you can always reinforce the arm gussets so you can wear it along with a doublet.

Some merchants also sell an SCA fencing starter set for a reasonable price. It usually includes a fencing jacket, a mask, a pair of gloves, and an epee. Admittedly, the jacket is not something that will wow the wildly cheering crowds, but it will get you started. Some fencers sew trim to their commercial fencing jackets to make them more attractive. That approach will not make your jacket look more period, but it will certainly make it more colorful. Nevertheless, if you want to look spiff on the field, you may want to move into more appropriate and attractive garb the first chance you get.

Another option is to purchase a regular fencing jacket or fencing undergarment and wear it with a period shirt over it. (Just make sure that your fencing jacket covers both sides as some of them only protect either the right or the left side.) This combination will most likely comply with the Society Standards of Armor and the effect will be quite dashing, especially if you wear it with the right kind of breeches. Having said that let me clarify that a regular t-shirt under a shirt is in no way a fencing undergarment and does not constitute appropriate armor. A t-shirt is made of a stretchy material that cannot withstand the abuses of a blade, and will not pass the punch test. A fencing undergarment is a short-sleeved piece of clothing made out of a double or triple layer of resistant material such as canvas, denim duck or trigger, and combined with a shirt or tunic can pass the punch test.

• **Yes, I would purchase or commission my garb but, alas, I am broke . . .**

So your budget is tight, and that indeed poses a problem. Well, if that is the case, not all is lost. Think about what you can do in exchange for garb. Bartering is a fine Scadian tradition. Can you do woodwork? Metalwork? Can you brew mead, beer, cordials, root beer or other potables? Do you have any scribal talents? How about babysitting? Hey, can you mow a lawn? Are you any good with computers? Just because you cannot sew doesn’t mean that you have nothing to trade in exchange for decent garb. Then again, if that is still not feasible then you will have to bite the bullet and do your best to learn how to put your stuff together. For that purpose, getting in touch with your local sewing circle is always a good start.

• **All right, so I want to put my garb together myself. Where do I start? Where do I get the patterns? And how do I get in touch with my local sewing circle? Hey wait a minute! Do we even HAVE a sewing circle?**

Sewing circles are wonderful things. Whether you have been sewing for years or you can’t even mend your socks, you can always benefit from getting together with other people who can help you learn about new patterns and putting garb together. Some groups have sewing circles that have been around for years, while others don’t have a sewing group at all. In the first case, you should not
have much trouble since the sewing group’s schedule will most likely be posted on the website of your local (or neighboring) Barony, Shire, Canton, etc. However, should there not be a local sewing group, you can always organize a sewing night yourself (or in Scadian lingo: A stitch and bitch night), and take it from there. Sooner or later you will find other kindred souls – in many cases other fencers – who will want to get together to figure out how to do this. Some of them are likely to have some experience in the particular period you are looking for and can lend you a hand.

- **Sewing Circle Etiquette, is there really one?**

Yes, believe it or not there is an unspoken etiquette regarding a number of sewing circles. For instance, people will be willing to lend you a hand in measuring, cutting, patterning, etc., but do not expect your friends to make your garment for you. You may get away with it once but after a while it will get old, especially if you don’t make a real effort on putting your own stuff together, and people will not be very tempted to be so helpful the next time around. Again, if what you are looking for is someone to do the whole garment for you, go for the commissioning or bartering approach from the very beginning. In the end, it will save you and everyone else a lot of grief. All in all, be polite, be helpful, listen to instructions, and you will be all right.

IV. **Materials, Patterns and Styles, Oh My! (Or Where’s the Beef?)**

1. **Materials:**

Okay, so you have decided to either commission or put together your own garb. What are you going to use? True, the standards of armor talk about “resistant” and “impenetrable” materials. It also says that for the impenetrable sections you should use the equivalent of four layers of trigger. Does this mean that you can only use trigger for your armor? No. It means that you can either use your four layers of trigger or it’s equivalent, meaning that the fabric or combination of fabrics can pass the punch test. One good way to do this is to take your materials, sew them together to make an approximately 5” by 5” swatch, and have it punch-tested by a fencing marshal. If it passes, you have it made, and if it doesn’t at least you didn’t spend hours of work on a garment that you won’t be able to wear as armor.

Here is a list of suggested materials:

**FABRICS:**

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**A NOTE ON FABRIC CARE:** No matter what fabric you are using, always remember to wash your fabric with a mild soap such as Dreft or Ivory before cutting your garment. Fabric will shrink in the wash and particularly in the dryer. You want it to shrink before you put your garb together, not after. And never wash your garment in hot water no matter how smelly it is, as hot water will most likely ruin it. It is preferable that you pre-soak it or wash it more than once in the delicate cycle than to have it shrunk to infant size.

Another thing to take into consideration is that even though some fabrics can be thrown in the dryer, linens, silks and brocades fare better when you hang them out to dry. They will lose shape and fiber otherwise. Losing fiber will not only shorten the life of your garment, but by weakening the weave it may also make it lose its “abrasive resistant” or “puncture resistant” quality as armor. If you see a thick coat of lint in your dryer, it means that your fabric is losing fiber. If you don’t see it, then you may be able to dry it using the tumble dry or delicate cycle.

Never, ever, ever dry your natural fibers in the hot/heavy cycle. When in doubt, fill your tub with warm soapy water, soak your garment for half an hour or so, rinse well (you can use a fabric softener if you want), and hang to dry.

So what kinds of materials can I use for my armor, you may ask? Here is a list of suggested fabrics, as well as their pros and cons:
- Linen: This is one of the best fabrics for armor out there, if not the best. It can be used for fighting shirts, doublets and breeches, as it is amazingly resistant. I recommend 3.5 to 5 oz linen weight for shirts. As long as the armpits are well reinforced, it will most likely pass muster. You can go heavier if you wish, but it gets very hot. As for reinforcement, you can do it with two or three layers of the same linen, or you can sandwich some habotai silk between the armpit or gusset of your shirt and another piece of linen. The advantage of this method is that when you wash it, it will dry at the same time as the rest of the shirt as opposed of having damp spots while the rest of the shirt is already dry.

For doublets and breeches: For doublets, a weight of 5 oz or more is recommended. Tree, and in some cases even two, layers of linen may be very likely to pass the punch test depending on the weight of the fabric. For breeches, 5 to 7 oz will do. No need to line them, but lining them is nice. Linen is not only a period material, but it is not more costly than cotton trigger or other non-period materials, if you buy it online or on sale. Breeches made out of linen are sturdy and durable, and they look exactly like a period piece of garb should look.

**Plusses** – It is very sturdy. It breathes well. It is a period material. Wait! It is amazingly period. You can embroider shirt cuffs and neckbands for a very spiff look. And if you are brave enough and want to embroider the whole doublet, then your garb will be drop-dead stunning – which is a very good thing when you are trying to get your opponent to, well, drop dead.

**Minuses** – It does tend to move a lot when cutting it. You will get a lot of lose threads if you don’t finish the edges.

- Wool: Other than linen, this is the best choice one can make for armor. Contrary to popular belief, wool wicks very well and it is incredibly versatile, even in summer. It can be used for doublets, breeches, skirts, cloaks and cassocks. It breathes well, drapes beautifully and when felted it is almost waterproof. For doublets and breeches you may want to use the lighter weight wools, whereas for cloaks and cassocks the heavier ones are just perfect. If you are sensitive to wool, make sure that your garment is properly lined so no portion of it touches your skin. You can hand wash it or wash it in the delicate cycle with cold water and a mild soap. Hang to dry.

**Plusses** – It is a period material that breathes and drapes well, virtually impermeable. Don’t need to finish the edges as it will not fray.

**Minuses** – Can get hot in the summer when fighting.

- Trigger: That is the first material that anyone is going to suggest, and what is recommended by many Kingdom Rules of the List. Use 4 layers of the stuff and most likely it will pass the punch test. Having said that, I must add that I don’t like to use trigger for my armor for the simple reason that what you normally find at stores is a poly/cotton blend (usually a horrid 50/50 or 60/40 blend). Trigger cloth is a trade name of a fabric developed and marketed by Burlington industries, and is always a cotton/poly blend, and anything that contains polyester will not breathe well. Fencing will make you sweat – always – and unless you like to sweat like a pig you will want to avoid anything that says “polyester” on it.

**Plusses** – It is very resistant, and the recommended material by the Society Rules of the List, as well as other Kingdom’s.

**Minuses** – It does not breathe well, it is ugly, and it not a period material. For the same price, you can get linen and get the same protection.

- Cotton. Cotton is not a bad choice. It is a natural fiber, breathes well and it is very washable. Make sure that you wash it before you cut it, and make sure that there is not a poly blend. (see above). Here is a list of various types of cotton:

  - Muslin: Muslin is suitable for shirts as it is very light and breathes extremely well. You will need to reinforce the arm gussets the same way as you would reinforce linen shirts (see linen section). Always inspect your muslin shirt after every practice and event for
wear and tear, as muslin will not normally last as long as other fabrics. And use your common sense. A tightly weaved muslin would work, but cotton gauze obviously not.

**Plusses** – It breathes very well, and it is cheap.

**Minuses** – It is not as durable as cotton duck or linen.

- **Denim, Denim Duck and Cotton Lycra:** Denim and denim duck (not to be confused with trigger duck) are good, sturdy materials for lining doublets and for making hoods. They are usually 100% cotton and breathe well. These days I line my doublets with linen and not cotton or cotton denim. However, if you are going to use cotton, this is what you want. Some varieties of cotton denim have a little bit of Lycra in them. There is not usually more than 3% of Lycra in the fabric, so it breathes better than the poly/cotton kind. Cotton/Lycra also has the added bonus of having some give to it.

**Plusses** – One layer of denim duck plus whatever else you sew with it will most likely pass the punch test. It breathes great. The one with Lycra has a nice give to it, which will help fitting the garment.

**Minuses** – It is rather bulky, heavy, ugly and sometimes the buttonholes will fray from the inside out – especially the varieties that do not have Lycra. It is not a period material.

- **Cotton Gabardine** – Cotton gabardine is suitable for breeches and skirts, as well as doublets or lining for doublets.

**Plusses** – It is very resistant. Breathes well. Like denim duck, it usually passes the punch test with flying colors at the first try.

**Minuses** – It is heavy, non-period, and the heavier varieties can get really bulky. It works much better in venetians than in trunkhose, which use a lot more fabric. You may end up looking like MC Hammer if you put a lot of it in your pants. Dark colors tend to fade over time.

- **Brocades and Damasks:** Doublets. Enough said. And you can find some really nice bargains in the upholstery section of your local fabric store. Beware of the ones that have a rubber back as you will roast in it like a chicken. If you can find a 100% cotton brocade or damask, you are in business. Also, you can use it to line cloaks, the fighting kind and otherwise. Heck, you can use it for cloaks with something else as lining. As for cleaning it, I soak my brocade doublets in the tub with a delicate soap. Then I rinse it and hang them to dry. They come out like new.

**Plusses** – It is sturdy, it is pretty, it can be pearlged and decorated or simply be left alone. Can pass punch tests easily and it is relatively easy to care for.

**Minuses** – Unless it is the 100% cotton kind, it will not breathe well. Avoid designs that patently look like your grandmothers’ couch. Okay, maybe you really, really like your grandmother’s couch so never mind . . .

- **Silk:** You got to love silk, as it is one of the most versatile materials out there. Here are some suggested uses:

  - **Habotai:** Did you know that the Mongols used silk as armor? Not a single layer of silk, of course, but a multiple counter-layered armor of the stuff was used as protection against arrows. Nifty, huh? Well, we have tested 3 layers of medium weight Habotai silk sandwiched between two layers of linen and guess what? It passed the punch test! (Check with your local marshal and have it punch-tested before using it this way.) It also breathes great. However, you don’t want to use it against your skin, as it will get sticky. So it is terrific for lining doublets but definitely not for making fighting shirts.

**Plusses** – In several layers it can be impenetrable. Breathes great. Very light.

**Minuses** – You don’t want it against your skin when fighting, especially in summer, as it will stick when you perspire. This combination will indeed protect you against broken blades, but because it is so light there is very little cushioning against blows that will leave a bruise. (Then again, if you didn’t want to get bruised you would be doing something else.)
• **Noil:** Also known as raw silk (although there is nothing raw about it). It is not as durable as other silks, as noil is made out of the waste left from broken cocoons. Unlike regular silks, it is not reeled from one single strand, which is what gives silk its strength and durability. Noil is carded and woven like cotton instead, which gives it its slubby texture and it is not as strong as habotai, for example. It can be used for breeches, and it works well on Turkish pants (salwar) for those folks who fight in Middle Eastern garb. Noil is also fine for the outside shell of doublets. However, for a protective interlining habotai is much better than noil. It could also work well for skirts.

**Plusses** – It is sturdy, breathes well, and is relatively easy to care for. (Except for the reds, which will stain your clothes.)

**Minuses** – The cheaper versions will pill horribly. It is not suitable for protective interlinings like habotai. Because of it is very slubby, noil does not slide well from your body when putting it on and taking it off, which makes it too annoying for linings.

• **Dupioni:** Excellent for decorative linings. Because it tends to fray, I would not recommend making a whole fighting ensemble out of it. (Although it is perfect for non-fighting outfits).

**Plusses** – Really, really pretty. Need more be said?

**Minuses** – Frays with wear.

• **Velvet and Velveteen:** Got to love velvet . . . so elegant. Beware, however, of the polyester kinds as they shine horribly and do not look period at all. And above all, never ever use stretch, crushed or hammered velvet or velour! Cotton velvets are your friends as well as its less expensive cousin, velveteen. Velveteen gives you the look of period velvet and you don’t have to break the piggy bank in the process. Velvets and velveteens can be used on mostly anything: doublets, cloaks, breeches, etc. You can pearl it, trim it, print or stencil it or simply leave it alone. It will, however, get hot so you may want to reserve it mostly for your winter fighting.

**Plusses** – It is elegant, sturdy, and versatile.

**Minuses** – Does not breathe well. Better if dry-cleaned so it’s not so easy to care for as other fabrics. The lesser quality varieties of velveteen may pill.

• **Corduroy:** This is the kind of material that works well for the “10 feet” rule as it gives the impression of some of the period velvets. Better for a winter garment for the same reasons as velvets and velveteens.

**Plusses** – From a distance it gives the impression of certain kinds of velvets used in period. It is sturdy and easy to care for.

**Minuses** – It tends to stretch and the cheaper kind may also pill.

• **Rayon:** The U. S. Trade Commission defines rayon as "manmade textile fibers and filaments composed of regenerated cellulose". This means that even though rayon is considered a manufactured fiber, it is made from tree cellulose. Rayon is highly absorbent, soft and comfortable, easy to dye and drapes well. Although by no means a period material, rayon breathes well and could be used in fighting skirts and perhaps some Middle Eastern garb. Beware, however, as regular rayon can be flammable. Must be either hand washed or dry-cleaned.

**Plusses** – Highly absorbent, soft and comfortable, easy to dye and drapes well.

**Minuses** – Regular rayon can be highly flammable. It does not have enough “body” for anything other than a skirt, or perhaps a salwar.

• **Leather and Suede:** Doublets. Really good doublets. And if you put sleeves on it you won’t need to reinforce the armpit gussets on your shirt. Just make sure that you use the regulatory 4 oz. weight or more. As for the care, you can throw some leathers in the washing machine (not in the dryer though, never in the dryer), but never suede. And always test a little piece before you do that.

**Plusses** – Strong, durable, no need for reinforced shirt gussets if sleeved. Easy to care for.
Minuses – Hot, absorbs perspiration.

- **Polyester, Acrylic, and Other Similar Beasts:** Avoid all of them. That’s all you need to know. End of story.

**COLORS:** Solid colors are your best bet. Try to use your good judgment and look at a lot of pictures so you can get the idea. Believe it or not pink at one point was considered a very manly color, for instance. However, neon green would not cut the mustard, and neither would Hawaiian prints. (Although your garb would certainly blind your opponent, which is not a bad thing. Hum, there’s an idea . . .)

In the case of brocades and damasks, make sure that the design is not too obviously modern. If those roses look like real roses, it is not a period design. Then again you may want to wear it anyway because it may be a pretty design, just as long as you know that it is not a period one.

**THREAD:** Either polyester or cotton commercial threads should do the trick. I like Güterman or Metzler, but your regular Wal-Mart variety will do too. The difference is that the better-quality thread will not bunch up and clog your machine like the cheap one. If you are putting your garment by hand, and your garment is linen or wool, linen thread is the most appropriate fiber. Heavy quilting threads are excellent for cartridge pleating, but do not attempt to put your whole garment together with them. Since they are stronger than the fabric, instead of unraveling the fabric will rip it apart with use. Believe me, I learned this the hard way.

**BUTTONS:** Buttons have to be spaced about 1 inch apart so a blade cannot pass easily between them. That means a lot of buttons to do and undo. If you want to avoid this, you can reinforce your garb with Velcro. That way there will be no gap between your buttons. Just make sure that the Velcro is not visible at all. As for the best buttons to use with your garb to spiff it up, here’s a list with my favorites:

- **Bead and Cloth Buttons:** This is one of the most period and least expensive ways to spiff up your garb. Cloth buttons were widely used in period, they are easy to make, and they will always match your garb. And no, I am not referring to the kind that you pick up at your local fabric store, which comes in a kit with a shank and a little metal plate that you line with your fabric. Those are modern buttons, look like modern buttons, and believe me they will fall apart the first time someone hits them with an epee, not to mention a heavy rapier blade.

What I am talking about is the kind of button that was either made with a covered wooden bead or entirely with cloth. It was very popular in the 16th Century times. You will find a link at the end of this handout for a website with instructions on how to make them.

- **Pewter Cast Buttons:** You can’t go wrong with those. If you can find them at a reasonable price, grab them. And if you are fortunate enough to have a friend who can cast them, bribe him or her. And if you know how to cast them, I’ll be happy to bribe you.

- **Other Commercially Available Buttons:** You may want to experiment with other kinds of buttons. Avoid flat, sew through buttons that do not have a shank, as they are not period and do not work well for this kind of thing.

**BRAID AND TRIM:** We all like silver and gold on our trim and, thanks to modern technology, we can obtain that kind of thing at a reasonable price. Nevertheless, there are some kinds of shiny gold and silver trim that are obviously plastic and that look really tacky, and that should be avoided when possible. On the other hand braid is generally a good choice, especially when attempting to achieve the 16th Century effect. You can usually find it at your local fabric store for a good price or even make it yourself.
VELCRO: Like with anything else, there are good things and bad things about Velcro. One of the best things is that if you use Velcro to close your doublet you will be able to get in and out of it in no time, without having to deal with all those pesky little buttons. If done properly, no blade will go through and therefore your garment will comply with the standards of armor. Also, if cleverly hidden, nobody will even notice that you are using Velcro instead of buttons or as reinforcement to them. The drawback of it is that on a very hot day you may want to open your doublet to cool off. The moment you do that the Velcro will show and your beautiful period effect will be ruined.

ZIPPERS: Someone asked me a while ago why Velcro was acceptable and not zippers. Besides the fact that zippers are much more difficult to hide than a discreet Velcro strip, zippers tend to fail rather often, particularly with heavy use. Rapier fighting does qualify as heavy use. Avoid zippers at all costs.

2. Patterns and Styles:
We cannot talk about patterns without talking about styles, so I am addressing the two issues together. The first thing to consider is what you want for your garb in terms of your persona. Most likely you will be looking for sixteen-century doublet and breeches (or skirt), which is the style most associated with rapier fighting. But it may also be that you want to do something else such as Japanese, Middle Eastern, or even belly-dancing armor. (Yes, I know of a certain lady who successfully created harem-girl, perfectly legal armor. She certainly made a statement on the field.)

There is a permanently ongoing discussion as to whether something other than sixteen-century European is appropriate for the fencing field. This class will not get into the discussion or endorse either position. The purpose of this class is to provide orientation on how to achieve the desired effect on the field, in the best and most period manner, while complying with the Society Rapier Standards of Armor. Anything else is up to you.

- Sixteen Century European: Shirt, doublet, venetians or trunkhose, the occasional plunderhosen, or skirts. That pretty much sums it up. So where, pray tell can I find the patterns for my project? Here goes:
  - Shirts: My favorite pattern is Grace Gamble’s Elizabethan shirt, which was published in The Oak several years ago. It is a very easy pattern and quite adaptable for fighting. All you have to do is reinforce the arm gussets to make it legal. This pattern has been uploaded to the House Fallen From Grace website, under “Resources.”
  - Doublets and Breeches: There are several resources on this, as follows:
    - Janet Arnold’s Patterns of Fashion: This is one of the best sources out there and a must-have book for costumers and fighters both. Although the patterns and instructions can hardly be labeled as “beginners” projects, they are not so terribly difficult to figure out with a little help from your friends.
    - The Tudor Tailor: This is a nice publication by Ninya Mikhaila, who is a historical costumer for the interpreters at places like the Tower of London, Kentwell Hall, and Hampton Court Palace. They have also come up with an excellent line of patterns.
    - Margo Anderson’s Elizabethan Gentlemen’s Wardrobe: It is a user-friendly type of pattern that looks good. It has some modern shortcuts, but it looks good and it is easy to fit. It is especially good for those gentles who wear the larger sizes.
    - Men’s Elizabethan Garments (Period Patterns): This is a commercially available pattern and it was the first I used for my fighting garb. The pattern itself is very good, but the directions are horribly confusing. Definitely not for
beginners. One thing to remember, the male doublet pattern is designed to have a peascod. This is not a problem for men, but ladies are not built like that and will have to alter it to make it fit.

- **Other sources:** You will find links to online instructions at the end of this document.

- **Skirts, Kilts, Leines, and Trews:**

  - **Skirts:** On the subject of skirts, there is a lot to be said. The ladies who fight in skirts love them because they flow, they hide their legs and, if wide enough, can be used to parry blows pretty much in the manner of a cloak, which is really nice. On the other hand, those of us who prefer breeches find skirts cumbersome and easy to trip with, particularly if you are the kind who likes to drop in a very low stance, run around a lot in melees and parry with your feet when grounded. Whichever the case may be, before making a decision try fighting both in breeches and in skirts first. And if you decide that skirts is what goes with your fighting style, then you may want to make them wide enough so they can flow, and short enough so you don’t trip in them. And always practice in your skirt. It doesn’t do to get used to fighting in pants only to find yourself on the list field wearing a style of armor that you are not one hundred percent comfortable with.

  - **Kilts, Leines, and Trews. (Or, I want to be a Highlander):** I am not going to start a dissertation on kilts in this class. But if you have decided to fight in Highlander garb you might as well do it properly. The appropriate garb would have been a léine, a doublet-like jacket called an inar, a great kilt (which was more like a blanket), and trews (trousers). The latter are not only period, but will protect your legs on the field and help you better comply with the standards of armor.

    - **Trews:** I have included a link for a pattern for period trews in the “Resources” section at the end of this document. (Yes, it is for Irish trews but they are pretty much the same). Or you may want to use hose or leggings instead, which will give you the right look. One note on the issue of legwear, when I say “hose” I mean the thick period kind or the ones used for dancing, not your Hanes of Victoria’s Secret nylon pantyhose. And since most knitwear is not as strong as fabric, you will probably need to wear double hose, or fencing socks under your hose.

    - **Léine:** So what exactly is a léine? A leine is a tunic that goes down mid-thigh or about the knees. It has very wide, hanging sleeves. The most common colors are saffron, white or unbleached natural. And speaking of léines, you will find that quite often patterns will show a gathering string on the sleeves. You want to avoid making your léine with those strings; the only period they are suitable for is 1960’s Ren-Faire Hippie. Like regular skirts, léines are wonderful things for hiding your legs, and the huge sleeves will not only hide your arms but can be used to parry blows as well. Unlike skirts, you won’t be tripping over the darned things every time you advance, retreat or lunge. There is a link for a very nice pattern for it at the end of this document in the “Resources” section.

    - **Inar:** On top of the léine a doublet-like jacket was worn. When sleeved, the bottom part of the sleeve would be open to let the leine’s sleeve hang down. It is really cool. You can find a picture at the end of this document.

    - **Kilt:** Small kilts are not period, and neither are plaids as we know them today. The term plaid (pronounced ‘playd’) in the context it was used in period means a blanket or cloak, not the pattern of the material. It can refer to cloth that is white, a single color such as green or brown, striped, or checked. It is basically a long, un-shaped length of cloth, pinned as a cloak at the breast. Garments such as this have a long history of use by rural people throughout Britain. So for your period kilt any plain or tartan wool from your neighborhood fabric store will do. Striped and single-color plaids were also very
common, especially gray and brown, which served as good camouflage in the hills of Scotland.

Having said that, if I were you I would wear my kilt before or after going into the list field, not on it, as it can be cumbersome. For fighting, a belted lêine, inar and trews should suffice.

- **Middle Eastern, Japanese, and Other Funky Stuff**: Lengthy discussions have taken place over the fencing lists on whether Middle Eastern or Japanese should or not be worn on the list field. I am not here to tell people what to wear but to make it safe (and spiff). So if it works, and if it is fun, go for it.

  - **Middle Eastern**: For a Middle Eastern outfit you want an inner and an outer caftan and a salwar. Make your inner caftan with sleeves that narrow at the end so you can tuck them into your gloves. Your outer caftan can have flowing sleeves that will serve you to parry blows with. As for salwars, they are very baggy trousers that were worn in Turkey, Persia and other Middle Eastern areas in period. They are very comfortable and the greatest thing when it comes to lunging. A sash for your waist is recommendable as you will be able to carry your valuables in it. Look for useful links for Middle Eastern patterns on the “Resources” section of this document.

  - **Japanese**: Just like Middle Eastern, Japanese garb flows and those long sleeves are great for parrying. But if you are going to do it, please do it properly. Kimonos are not period, but kosode (the cote that later evolved into a kimono) and hakama (trousers) are. I have included a link with some nice online patterns for that. As with Middle Eastern, just make sure to wear a narrow sleeved shirt with reinforced gussets under your kosode so you can tuck it inside your gloves and no skin is exposed.

  - **Other**: Whether you choose a persona that is Russian, Mongol, Viking or something else, be prepared to do your homework. Take your time to ask questions and research your style as thoroughly as you can. Whenever possible, pick a material that would have been used in period and, if that is not possible, try to get something that at least looks like it. Most importantly, always remember to take your fabric and, later, your finished garment to your marshal for inspection. Good luck and happy fighting!

V. **FOOTWEAR:**

Now that you have your new spiff looking fencing garb you must decide what shoes to wear. Decisions, decisions, decisions.

The Rules of the List say that fencers must wear closed-top boots or shoes. Does that mean that you can wear your sneakers? Absolutely. But will your neon green and blue Nike Air Jordans give you the period look? Absolutely not. The point is, if you must wear sneakers – and admittedly sneakers are very comfortable fencing shoes – then for crying out loud pick some black ones. They will look much better, will give you the same support as the white or colored ones, and will not look as jarringly modern as their funky counterparts.

Hiking shoes like Timberlands, Rockports, and the like are another good choice. They will provide you with ankle support and have excellent traction. Just make sure to break them in before wearing them in tournaments, as new shoes will kill your feet.

Another way to obtain comfortable, period-looking footwear without breaking the piggy bank is to purchase a pair of inexpensive chukka boots at places like Payless Shoes. At ten feet of distance they give the impression of Elizabethan style. This will provide you with comfortable, inexpensive, and really nice footwear.

There are also a couple of merchants that sell Mary Rose type shoes, at prices comparable to Rockports or Timberlands. What is a Mary Rose type shoe? The Mary Rose was a ship that sank in
the 16th Century. The wreckage has been raised and studied. Among the findings are some pairs of shoes, which exemplify some of the footwear that was worn at the time. A pair of shoes like this will really complement your outfit.

Or you can buy boots. Boots are always good as they provide you with the best support, and the right kind will have decent traction, not to mention that boots look really spiff. So if you can afford them or find them at a reasonable price, go for it!

And remember, there is nothing worse than stepping onto the field while wearing uncomfortable footwear, as this will definitely affect your footwork and you will have a miserable time. So if it comes to a choice between wearing your old black sneakers and your spanking, unbroken new boots, wear the sneakers. You can always wear the boots for Court after the tournament is done. Trust me on this one.

VI. GLOVES:

The Rules of the List establish that hands and wrists must be covered with gauntlets made of leather or other resistant material, that leatherwork gloves are acceptable, and that all gloves must have long cuffs overlapping the sleeves by at least 3".

One good way to have good, fashionable and inexpensive pair of gloves is to get a pair of leatherwork gloves and sew a cuff of the same material as your doublet. I have seen it done and it looks very good.

I would like to add, however, that if you like to fight single or double dagger padded epee or three-weapon gloves are your friends. Whenever you in-fight you are at a higher risk of getting your hands hit with either blades or quillions, and padding makes all the difference in the world.

One word of caution though, some lesser quality black gloves are over dyed and as a result will bleed and stain your hands and garments. Look for good quality gloves and ask around. Some brands are notorious for bleeding while others are not.

VII. MASKS, HOODS, AND GORGETS:

- **Masks**: In choosing a mask, the first thing that you need to decide is whether you will be wearing your hood inside or outside your mask. If you are going to wear your hood inside your mask, then you have to try on your mask while wearing your hood. If you are planning to wear your hood outside the mask, try it on without it. Your mask should fit snugly, but not tight. Make sure that you feel comfortable with it, and that it does not jiggle or move when you shake your head. A blow with an epee or schlager can make a loose mask twist really hard, and you may end up with either a bloody nose, a black eye, or with the wire mesh tattooed onto your forehead. We don’t want that to happen, do we? Some people like to decorate their masks with faces, hats, wigs, beards, veils, or all of the above. Should you decide to go that route, just make sure that whatever you use to paint or decorate your mask does not impair your vision. Remember, silliness is a fine Scadian tradition, but safety comes first.

- **Hoods**: One of your first investments when you begin doing rapier, is getting your own hood. Why? If nothing else wearing a loaner hood still damp with somebody else’s sweat may not be in your list of favorite things to do. They are also inexpensive and easy to make, so what’s your excuse? Just remember that the hood must be made of puncture resistant material, meaning the equivalent to 4 layers of trigger and punch tested by a marshal. Hoods can be worn under or over the mask. There is no big difference, so it depends on what you feel most comfortable with. Denim, denim duck, leather, suede remnants sewn together, linen
canvas and heavy cotton are good choices for making your hood. Like with the rest of your armor, remember that whatever you choose, it must breathe well or you will be roasting like a chicken under that thing.

- **Gorget:** If you are a novice fencer, and/or not playing with heavy rapier (schlager, Del Tin, etc.) yet, chances are that you don’t need a gorget. However, if you like to participate in melees or fight with single or double dagger, then you will want to wear one. Why? Because melee fighting is more hectic than single combat, adrenaline runs much higher, and even in the best of circumstances the chances to get a hard hit to the throat while running around increase a good deal. The same could be said for single or double dagger in which, despite not involving so much running around, the fighting is so close that the possibilities of injury to the throat do tend to increase. All I can say is better safe than sorry.

VIII. **RESOURCES:** This section contains some sources and recommended reading, as well as useful links and pictures, and it does not pretend in any way to be comprehensive. A thorough discussion of every style and period can take a number of classes of its own.

**SOURCES AND RECOMMENDED READING:**

*The Society Rules of the List*

*Your Kingdom’s Rules of the List*

*Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women C 1560-1620* by Janet Arnold

*The Tudor Tailor.* By Ninya Mikhaila.


**LINKS:**

**Armor, Gloves and Fencing Equipment:**

- [www.triplette.com](http://www.triplette.com) Triplette Competition Arms: Masks, glove, tips, blades, etc.
- [www.americanfencers.com](http://www.americanfencers.com) American Fencers Supply Company: Masks, glove, tips, blades, etc.
- [www.darkwoodarmory.com](http://www.darkwoodarmory.com) Darkwood Armory: The best blades money can buy
- [www.santelli.com](http://www.santelli.com) Santelli: Masks, glove, tips, blades, etc.

**Footwear:**

- [http://www.nmia.com/~bohemond/](http://www.nmia.com/~bohemond/) Period-style boots and Mary Rose type shoes. They also carry Middle Eastern type boots and shoes
- [http://www.scaboots.com/](http://www.scaboots.com/) Boots. (Duh!) They are not custom-made, but they are very affordable

**Fabric, patterns and notions:**

- [http://www.tudortailor.com/](http://www.tudortailor.com/) The Tudor Tailor: Patterns from the 16th Century
- [http://www.margospatterns.com](http://www.margospatterns.com) Margo Anderson’s Elizabethan patterns
- www.fabrics-store.com  Fabrics Store:  Good source for linen
- www.sewincentral.com  Sewing Central:  Linens, wools and patterns
- www.bblackansons.com  B. Black and Sons:  Best prices on wool
- www.fabric.com  Nice linens and other fabrics
- www.denverfabrics.com  Linens, wools, velvets, you name it
- http://www.classactfabrics.com  Same as above
- http://www.thaisilks.com,  Thai Silks:  Silks
- http://www.srfabrics.com  Silk Road Fabrics:  Silks
- www.barjaveldesign.com  Barjavel Design:  Silk, linen, patterns, notions, pewter buttons, etc.
- http://www.fabricdragon.com/  Fabric Dragon :  Linen, silk, wool, notions
- http://www.woodedhamlet.com/  Wooden Hamlet:  Braid, trim, buttons and other notions
- www.cheeptrims.com  Cheep Trims:  Buttons, trim, and miscellaneous

How-To and Information

- General 16th Century
  http://www.houseffg.org/belphoebe/  My own webpage, “Une Robe Magnifique” with lots more links and information.
  http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/jennifer/buttons/Basicfabricbuttons.htm  Mistress Dunstane Talana the Violet’s instructions for making stuffed buttons
  http://www.employees.org/~cathy/  Kate’s Corner:  Mistress Kate Maunsel’s website.  Very good articles, including how to make wrapped and stuffed buttons.
  http://www.elizabethancostume.net/  Drea Leed’s mega-costuming page

- Scottish:
  http://albanach.org/leine.html  An article on leines by Matthew A. C. Newsome
  http://www.reconstructinghistory.com/irish/kilcommon.html  An article by Kass McGowen regarding the Kilcommon jacket
  http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~wew/celt-clothing/  An article by Meistr Gwylym ab Owain on Celtic clothing

- Middle Eastern Costuming:
  http://home.earthlink.net/~lilinah/Rashid/Rashid0.html  Rashid’s Persian patterns, for those of you who like to dress in Middle Eastern
  http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/etext/tilke/index.html  Some examples of extant pieces

- Japanese costuming:
  http://www.reconstructinghistory.com/japanese/Jap123s.html  Some basic instructions from Kass McGowen