

History of Fashion

History of Fashion – Structured Overview

1. Pre-Historical & Ancient Periods

Era / Region	Key Characteristics	Typical Materials & Techniques
Pre-historic (c. 30,000–?10,000 BCE)	Body adornments for protection, status, ritual	Animal skins, shells, beads; simple draping
Ancient Egypt (c. 3100–?30 BCE)	Symbolic colors (white = purity, blue/green = fertility)	Linen, linen-woven pleats, beaded jewelry; elaborate wigs
Mesopotamia & Levant (c. 3500–?500 BCE)	Social hierarchy expressed through dress	Wool, flax; patterned kilts, shawls, headaddresses
Ancient Greece (c. 800–?31 BCE)	Emphasis on drape, proportion, modesty	Wool & linen; chiton , himation , peplos ; natural dyes
Ancient Rome (c. 753 BCE –?476 CE)	Blend of Greek styles, later more ornate	Wool, silk (imported), toga , stola , palla ; use of gold thread

2. Medieval Era (5th–?15th c.)

Sub-Period	Social Context	Fashion Highlights
Early Middle Ages	Feudal system, limited trade	Simple tunics, cloaks; wool & linen; limited ornamentation
High Middle Ages (11th–13th)	Rise of towns, guilds	Longer, fitted gowns for women; houppelande , cotehardie for men; use of fur linings
Late Middle Ages (14th–15th)	Growing wealth of merchant class	Vertical stripes , poulaine (long, narrow trouser legs); elaborate embroidery; introduction of silk from Italy

Key Innovations: Tailoring begins; sumptuary laws regulate colors & fabrics by class.

3. Renaissance (15th–?17th c.)

Region	Distinctive Features

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Italy	Rich fabrics (silk, velvet), intricate embroidered patterns , low-cut bodices, slashed sleeves revealing lining
France	Courtly opulence under Francis I ; introduction of Spanish farthingale (hoop skirt)
England	Tudor style – ruffs , farthingales , heavy use of brocade and ermine
Spain	Conservative silhouette; Spanish sleeves , modest necklines; heavy black fabrics (reflecting Counter-Reformation)

Technological Note: Development of the **loom** and **pattern books** spreads styles across Europe.

4. Baroque & Rococo (17th–18th c.)

Period	Silhouette	Typical Elements
Baroque (1600–1750)	Full, rounded shapes; wide skirts supported by panniers	Lace collars, elaborate crinolines , rich brocades, gold thread
Rococo (1730–1780)	Light, pastel palette; exaggerated curves	Bodices with panniers , pastel silks, floral motifs, powdered wigs

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